# Reconsidering Senses of Belonging amongst Armenian Diaspora Communities: Armenians in Toronto and New York City

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# Acknowledgements

# Abstract

The attachment of immigrants and their descendants to an ethnic community is, at least partly, a matter of personal preference and the manner it is articulated is shaped by their interaction with ethnic cognates and host-country-specific conditions. This thesis reconsiders the sense of belonging of Armenians who consciously identify themselves as diaspora members and are engaged in community affairs. The research focuses on the Armenian world in Toronto and New York City. It explores new trends and discourses which shape engagement in the community and transnational social fields. The most notable of these transformations in the last three decades has been Armenia's independence as a state, which has strengthened transnational relations between the homeland and the diaspora and shaped understanding of diasporic culture.

The research first explores the ways in which diasporic Armenians simultaneously navigate multiple facets of these identities, and second examines physical manifestations of their ethnic identities in diasporic spaces by looking at their affiliations or relations with diaspora organisations, as well as individuals' motives for attending ethnic realms in the diaspora. Third, it scrutinises the homeland imaginary of Armenian diaspora members.

The findings indicate that there is no standard cultural background that is shared by all people of Armenian descent. The manifestation of Armenian identity is rebuilt between homeland-orientated and traditional markers of identity. The thesis shows that although Armenia as a homeland has become a tangible concept in the diasporic imagination, it is not the ultimate desired destination for members of the Armenian diaspora who are actively involved in transnational fields. In addition to the 1915 narratives, the existence of Armenia and the fight for freedom in Nagorno-Karabakh have had a significant impact on the construction of diaspora identities, encouraging young diaspora members to join the transnational community and mobilise on behalf of the homeland.

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# Chapter 1.  Introduction

"… man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun".

(Clifford Geertz, 1973, p.5)

## 1.1   Introduction: Armenians in the transnational context

On a rainy afternoon in Toronto, when I was working hard to interact vigorously with the Armenian community as a part of my fieldwork, I met Maral, a first-generation community member who came from Egypt in her twenties. Maral had dedicated herself to community affairs for more than 50 years from the first day she arrived in Toronto. During our conversation, she repeatedly stressed the distinctiveness in the *modus operandi* of the Armenian identity, depending on differences in mentality, perception and interpretation which construct self-representations and belonging to the community. Maral ended our conversation of more than an hour with these words: "We are products of our communities". Maral seemed to emphasise a prevalent view about diaspora identities which refers to the "multiplicity of attachments that people form to places through living in, remembering, and imagining them" (Malkki, 1992, p.38). Moreover, her statement implied the diverse and contested aspects of their communities over the components and meanings which form these communities.

The concept of diaspora refers to more than a group of people living in a scattered way outside their homeland. In the 1980s and 1990s, scholarly works on the fractured, hybrid, dynamic, negotiated and gendered character of the diasporic identity and its attachment to its 'roots' were produced (Hall, 1990; Clifford, 1994; 1997; Koshy, 1994; Brah, 1997) in opposition to essentialist explanations of this concept. With the dynamics of transnationalism and globalisation, diaspora communities have become more heterogeneous, and the manifestation of the diasporic identity and membership of a

diasporic community have become more contested. Existing studies point out the diverse, negotiable and fluid nature of these 'communities' (Mavroudi, 2010) and the constructed, imagined and material aspects of notions of 'home' and 'homeland' (Blunt, 2005; Blunt and Dowling, 2006) by taking a multiplicity of diasporic and transnational experiences and manifestations into consideration.

In a similar vein, my study examines how a sense of belonging to a diasporic identity is (re)constructed and negotiated with a specific focus on the diasporic experiences of the Armenian communities living in two metropolises on the east coast of North America. My thesis demonstrates the flexibility of the diaspora identity in the definitions of Armenian ethnic and national belonging in two different diasporic milieus. The study explores how diasporic individuals locate themselves in a diverse Armenian community. It also focuses on the ways in which - and why - community members maintain links to their culture in the diaspora and how the idea of homeland is imagined, articulated and practised by them. This study draws on rich debates about the concepts of diaspora, transnationalism and belonging and builds on new insightful empirical contributions of metropolitan Armenian-Americans. It thus explores the rebuilding of the Armenian diasporic identity, the boundaries of this identity, diasporic spaces and participants' ways of achieving a sense of belonging concerning these diasporic spaces as members of a multi-layered, diverse and heterogeneous community.

 "Oxymoronic" (Dufoix, 2008) definitions of the concept of diaspora emphasise its multi-layered and flexible features. Diasporic identity is formed by the subjective experiences of those who identify themselves as members of a diaspora group. Attachment to the components of a specific identity and its representation are not fixed; rather, they are "always 'in process'" and involve "unbounded" articulations (Hall, 1996, p.2; Mavroudi, 2007). The boundaries and markers of an ethnic group's self and collective identity in the diaspora, its attachment to an imagined or defined homeland, relationships with ethnic cognates across the world, and the definition of 'home' or 'homeland' in relation to the host society are all constantly negotiated in diaspora communities (Dwyer, 2002; Staeheli and Nagel, 2006; Mavroudi, 2010). In these negotiated, reconfigured identities, it is hard to say that there is a natural and direct relationship between a particular place and a culture that is intertwined with the place.

Accordingly, diasporic identities can arguably be deterritorialised (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992) and they do not necessarily have to be associated with a particular geographical boundary, as is discussed throughout this thesis. At the same time, diasporas are exemplary of "unifying spaces" in which their members share some common aspects despite their internal divisions (Mavroudi, 2010). The distinctive features of a group and the country in which its members live, as well as the interaction between the two, form different manifestations of identities in this unifying space. This space requires a 'stance' to be inside and to mobilise around a commonality shared by dispersed people (Brubaker, 2005). Discussions regarding the flexibility, fluidity and instability of the components of identity take place amongst those who adopt this stance and claim to be a diasporan. My study centres on those who acknowledge this stance.

The worldwide Armenian population is often regarded as a classic diaspora group (Safran, 1991; Sheffer, 2003), together with the Jewish diaspora. Echoing the arborescent metaphor for the structure of diasporas used by Malkki (1992, p.28), Armenians refer to the walnut tree whose roots reach the four corners of the world in defining their diasporic condition (Dufoix, 2008, p.50). The Armenians, whose homelands were conquered by many polities, including the Seljuk Turks, the Ottoman Empire, the Persian dynasty, and Russia, sought to establish their own country repeatedly, while many fled to Greater Armenia, Iran, and India; some were able to migrate westwards, to Constantinople, to Ottoman Empire urban centres, to parts of Europe, including Italy, the Netherlands, and Poland; or southwards, to Syria, and thus formed different types of diaspora (Bournoutian, 1997a, p.289; Bournoutian, 1997b, pp.82-84; Kouymjian 1997, p.2; Tölölyan, 2004, p.37; Arkun, 2005, pp.65-66; Panossian, 2006, pp.80-81; Galkina 2006, p.185). Armenians developed their cultural and political consciousness in the regions where they dispersed and settled.

Tölölyan (2004, pp.42-43) stated that "certain features of the pregenocide diaspora should be emphasized" and draws attention to the "sedentary" and "religionational" characteristic of the Armenian communities who did not recognise their diasporic features and represented a 'network' whose 'nodes' were deeply embedded in their country of residence. By the First World War, the Armenian citizens of the Ottoman Empire were subject to a mass exodus whose roots extend to the 1894 and 1896 ethnic

violence and massacres against them (Dekmejian, 1997, p.414). The plight of the Armenian population living in the eastern Ottoman Empire, which reflected ill-treatment, pogroms and the absence of legal protection in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, formed the basis for a struggle, known as the Armenian Question, for civil rights and equal legal regulations. This turned into ethnic violence which culminated in the 1915 deportations with their irretrievable conclusions (Hovannisian, 1997, pp.205-206; Astourian, 2011, p.60; Tölölyan, 2004, p.43).

Amidst the devastation of the turn of the century, those who were able to find safe havens in Middle Eastern countries, Armenia, Russia, Europe or the Americas joined previously settled Armenians in these regions and constituted a part of Armenian communities in exile. Tölölyan (2000, p.115; 2004, p.44; 2010, p.28) argued that the desire to return to the homeland embodied in "exilic nationalism" has subsequently been replaced by "new diasporic transnationalism" with the idea of permanent residency in a diaspora and the re-establishment of "new links with post-Soviet Armenia" which achieved its independence in 1991.

Today more than half of all Armenians in the world live beyond the borders of the Republic of Armenia, yet there is no reliable count of their exact number (Pattie, 2005a, p.126). The Armenian *trans*nation consists of the Republic of Armenia, the de jure [sic] Republic of Artsakh or Nagorno-Karabakh and the heterogenous Armenian communities in the diaspora whose attachments to the homeland are not considered "as the unchallenged center of national identity" (Tölölyan, 2010, p.36). If homeland orientation is one of the essential elements of a diaspora (Brubaker, 2005, pp.5-6), how can a group of people who take this stance be associated with a particular territory where they or their predecessors do not have original, real or current ties, given that the original homeland was lost? The answer to this question is extensively discussed in the existing literature on the Jewish diaspora after the establishment of Israel in 1948. The Armenians are not outside this discussion and have been the subject of several scholarly works. In this context, the sense of belonging of 'returnees' to the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic (Armenian SSR) and post-Soviet Armenia has been scrutinised by scholarly several studies and theses within the scope of disciplines including anthropology, sociology and

geography (Laycock, 2012; 2017; Kasbarian, 2015a; Karageozian, 2015; Fittante, 2017; Pawlowska, 2017).

The Armenian communities of the USA and Canada, which date from the late nineteenth century, have been scholarly subjects of several disciplines such as political science, anthropology, geography, sociology, psychology and linguistics for over a century. Studies of Armenians in North America[1] – mostly originally from the Ottoman Empire – have chiefly, and reasonably, focused on sites with the largest and most active

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[1] For studies exploring the immigration, distribution, settlement, the development of economic and organisational forms, community structure and intra-community relations of the Armenian community between the early nineteenth century to the mid-1950s in the USA and Canada at the local and national scale from an historical, anthropological, sociological and psychological point of view, see Vartan Malcom (1919); Federal Writers' Project (1937); James Tashjian (1947); Sarkis Atamian (1955); Robert Mirak (1983); Isabel Kaprielian (1985); Berge Bulbulian (2001); Benjamin Alexander (2005) and Jack Apramian (2009). Vahe Sahakyan (2015) presented an historical sociology study on the "post-genocide Armenian diaspora" between the 1920s and 1980 across different host countries, France, Lebanon and the USA. For the specifically ethnographic and sociological geography studies amongst American and Canadian Armenians to reveal trends on intra-community relations, identity construction, identity maintenance, assimilation, residential and integration forms based on qualitative research methods, surveys and interviews, see Garo Chichekian (1989) Jenny Phillips (1989); David Waldstreicher (1989); Anny Bakalian (1994 [1993]). Aïda A. Keuroghlian-Boudjikanian's doctoral study in French, entitled *L'insertion résidentielle et économique des Arméniens de Montréal: comportements d'une communauté culturelle ou d'une communauté diasporique?* (*The residential and economic insertion of Armenians in Montreal: behaviours of a cultural community or a diasporic community?* in English) (2003) analysed the "residential and economic insertion of Armenians living in Montreal" within the scope of "the diasporic dimension" to her analysis by drawing on questionnaire and official state statistics and documents. Matthew A. Jendian's study, entitled *Becoming American, remaining ethnic: the case of Armenian-Americans in central California* (2008) focused on relationships between Armenians as an ethnic group in Central California and the USA as a host country by analysing assimilation and ethnic retention trends using both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Amongst more recent scholarly works, the ethnographic studies on Los Angeles Armenian communities can be enumerated as follows: Daniel Fittante (2018); Rik Adriaans (2018) and Oguzhan Ozdemir (2020). Finally, the Armenians in Pasadena, Boston and Montreal were one of the research subjects of more extensive research projects which primarily depended on comprehensive questionnaire qualitative methods as a complementary approach, entitled the 'Armenian Diaspora Opinion (Pilot Project)' conducted in 2018 and the 'Armenian Diaspora Public Opinion' conducted in 2019.

Armenian populations, including California and Montreal in Quebec. Several previous studies have emphasised hyphenated – maybe diluted – and symbolic forms of diasporic identities, and their ambiguous and symbolic feelings about home and homeland (Bakalian, 1994; Panossian, 1998; Pattie, 2005a; Tölölyan, 2000; 2007a; 2010; 2014; Kasbarian, 2015a). It is, however, important to reconsider the influence of independent Armenia established in 1991 on the Armenianness of those whose identities oscillate between "being and feeling Armenian": those whose identities re-emerge in a grey area where multiplicities are possible, and who form part of a diasporic group by connecting with the Armenian nation through political, cultural or humanitarian motivations; those who therefore mobilise on a local, national or global level around a shared belief in the cause of their homeland and ethnic cognates but which does not necessarily involve "the real desire of return" (Panossian, 1998, p.163). In all of this, the current thesis focuses on two mega, multicultural cities on the northeast coast, where traditional forms of identity are more fragile and ethnic retention is low due to the age and dispersion of the community living in these locations. It can be argued that the community on the American east coast (except for Montreal and Boston) has been under-studied since the late 1980s because it is laborious to conduct a sizeable study employing comprehensive survey methods given the cities' size and the widespread dispersal of the Armenian communities. However, to focus on those who adopt diasporic activism in a particular way is meaningful as a means of evaluating the diasporic identities of an important section of the community.

The thesis has two main arguments. The first, following Tölölyan's (2010; 2014) argument is that diasporic Armenians, mainly the most recent generations, no longer construct their identities in line with the pattern set by previous generations during the age of 'diasporic transnationalism'. Instead, they have become affiliated by attaching to multiple identities in their countries of settlement. Also, articulation of these identities is contingent on whatever place-specific conditions to which they are subject. The mechanisms which shape identities and help them manifest in the diaspora differ depending on the dynamics of each diasporic society. My main contribution to the Armenian diaspora studies in North America is therefore to demonstrate that the diaspora is not a monolithic structure, by exploring how the fragmented identities manifest in two

similar, but distinct, diasporic contexts which are embedded in multicultural societies. In this thesis, I illustrate how ethnic culture is situated in multicultural city lives, the diversities of which are celebrated and reflected in diasporans' identities. The findings show that the definitions of Armenian identity have changed with subjective, selective forms of identity performances. My study explores how Armenian community members challenge the dominant discourses produced by traditional organisations and 'traditional ways' while still keeping their identity alive. I argue that flexibility in the manifestation of identity makes space for the engagement of subsequent generations, whose identities are continuously being fragmented, within the diasporic realm.

The divisions between the subethnic groups whose countries of origin are different emerge when they encounter each other in the diaspora. This division prompted me to examine the extent to which the community is unified about the definition of the Armenian diaspora and diaspora activism. A related contribution that I am making to the diaspora literature and more specifically to the Armenian diaspora literature is to explore intra-community differences, rather than focusing on relations between Armenians as an ethnonational group and the host population. Such differences are observable in people's definitions of Armenianness, which determines who 'belongs' to the diaspora community and who does not, as well as the various manifestations of diasporic identity based on Armenians' affiliations with specific organisations. The different imaginations of Armenianness and the production and protection of a diasporic stance thus need to be deconstructed.

The second argument is that the recent independence of Armenia has not only solidified transnational ties between the homeland and the diaspora and encouraged diaspora nationalism towards the 'homeland', it has also impacted the comprehension of Armenianness in the diasporic spaces. To this end, it is meaningful to explore the centrality of the homeland to the identities of the east-coast Armenian participants, a significant proportion of whom carry the imprints of pioneers of the North American-Armenian diaspora even though they do not fully represent their cultural traits (Bakalian, 1994). This study, therefore, contributes to revealing new forms of the diasporic identity of traditional diaspora members which have been enhanced by the existence of an independent Armenia. In the post-Soviet period, Armenianness became more engaged

in transnational social fields with their newborn diaspora organisations and more intensive interaction with Armenia. It was also consolidated by a homeland-centred identity with a sense of co-responsibility, although the old diaspora members did not fully adopt the "national and moral authority attributed to the homeland" (Tölölyan, 2012, p.10). At the same time, subsequent generations, who reify their ties with Armenia and also Nagorno-Karabakh in the diasporic spaces, sustain identities that were shaped around their exile predecessors. This thesis seeks to explore the extent to which an independent Armenia is a motivating force for the diasporans and brings them together as attached to Armenia. It also explores insights of the diasporans about the locals in Armenia and immigrants from Armenia in the diaspora to understand whether they see themselves as part of an *imagined community*.

This study seeks to expand our understanding of how Armenians constitute ethnocultural belonging and place-attachments in embodied and emotional ways as active actors who shape, discuss and negotiate the structural feasibility and opportunities of host countries and relevant ethnic groups, enabling them to act for their ethnic survival. Another object is to demonstrate how the ramifications of contested cultural divisions and geographical divergences within the same group, or between cases, can be translated into multilocal terrains of diasporic belongings and various emotional geographies of belonging. A further aim is to highlight the unnatural relation between attributed place and culture, which are embedded in the participants' everyday practices, even though Armenia is the epitome of an identity-carrier as the 'binding effect' of the constructed diasporic acts of the community members. Because the feeling of being connected to a place, a space or a group is contextual and dynamic, the study not only focuses on the participants' constitution of belonging to feel 'in' the group/place, but also reveals their not-belongings and isolation from some spaces, and discusses why they feel insider or outsider regarding some groups, places or cultural traits.

## 1.2 Aims and research questions

This study focuses on Armenian communities in two different settings located in the east of North America. The aim and research questions of the thesis are as follows.

### 1.2.1 The main aim

The main aim of the thesis is to investigate new forms and discourses of diasporic identities and senses of belonging for Armenians on the east coast of North America.

### 1.2.2 Research questions

- How is Armenian identity perceived, and how does it manifest, in the self-representation of community members who are engaged in community affairs through different organisations and institutions, as they interact simultaneously with their own ethnic community and the dominant culture in their country of residence?

This question seeks to examine how the Armenians define their individual and collective identities as diasporic actors, in the process raising further questions. The thesis thus also probes how internal and external boundaries are shaped in the community, especially with recent migration waves from Armenia and Syria, and the effectiveness of these boundaries in producing a particular type of Armenianness within the community. Through this question, the thesis explores the evolution of shared symbols (re)produced by new and traditional organisations and the criteria that the community members stress as a basis for their feeling of attachment to the rest of the community and to Armenians across the world. Finally, the study investigates the grey area which is produced by hyphenated identities in host societies.

- What are the ways of engagement of the community members in this Armenian world in the diaspora?

The second question seeks to explore ways in which the community members keep their ethnic and diasporic identity alive and construct a "transnational diaspora consciousness" (Tölölyan, 2010). The question focuses on the diasporic spaces which they create and the affiliations which they develop in performing their identities. It seeks to examine the effectiveness of traditional organisations and institutions in shaping expressions of Armenianness and how they are perceived by new-generation diaspora members. Through this question, the thesis also explores how the Armenians create 'home' as a 'unifying space' despite divergences and tensions regarding Armenianness.

The production of rhetoric, myths and symbols by the organisations which create a sense of community in the Armenian identity is subject to changes in the context of intra-community relations, the concomitant interpretations of the community members and developments in the homeland. Moreover, since the identity became more self-referenced and evolved independently from the traditional organisation and institutions, the second research question probes alternative approaches to the motivations of the community members for participating in diasporic spaces. The thesis shows new forms of belonging to diasporic identities and spaces which reinvigorate the link with Armenia.

- How important is independent Armenia and/or Nagorno-Karabakh to the Armenian identity of community members?

This question explores how community members articulate and imagine their 'homeland(s)'. It investigates the extent to which members adopt the discursive and material production of transnational organisations. This research also seeks to investigate how a sense of connectedness with Armenia, and actions taken on behalf of Armenia and/or Nagorno-Karabakh influence the identity reformulation and place-attachments of community members. The question thus explores the extent to which the homeland becomes a central reference for identity amidst multi-layered belongings. The implications when feelings of long-distance nationalism increase towards the homeland, will also be scrutinised. The thesis explores the extent to which successive generations of the community can be active players in the development of Armenia. This research question aims to explore how members' feelings of national engagement with the kin-state affect the extent to which they 'feel at home' during their visits to the homeland. Finally, this question is designed to reveal the role of collective memory in locating a sense of belonging to a particular place.

This current study seeks to answer these questions by focusing on the 'webs of significance' of the community members which are to be uncovered through a careful exploration of self and collective identities within the diasporic communities in question.

## 1.3   Thesis outline

The present study consists of six substantive chapters, plus this current Chapter 1 (Introduction) and Chapter 8 (Conclusion). Chapter 2 presents a conceptual and theoretical discussion drawing primarily on the diaspora literature, accompanied by debates on transnationalism and the concept of belonging, which constitute the backbone of my analytical discussions in the empirical chapters (Chapters 5, 6 and 7). The first section critically discusses the diaspora literature in line with Dufoix's (2008, p.21) three definitions of the concept: open, categorical and oxymoronic. Then, in the second section, I explore the interrelation between the concepts of transnationalism and diaspora. The third section briefly tackles the notion of nationalism within the context of diasporic behaviours. Finally, in the fourth section, I discuss the sense of belonging which is operational in evoking ethnic retention and in urging individuals and groups to take action on behalf of the kin-state and co-ethnics in the diasporic and transnational framework.

Following the origins of the Armenian dispersion, Chapter 3 starts by outlining the history of their dispersal in the USA and Canada. It then illustrates the historical and contemporary context of the Armenian dispersion and settlements, paying particular attention to my two research sites. In the chapter's fourth section, I briefly consider the past and present role of diaspora organisations and institutions in keeping the Armenian identity alive amongst exile immigrants in the past and diasporic transnationals today. This section forms an important ground for understanding the position of the organisations and institutions in the diasporic behaviours of the participants which are discussed in the empirical chapters. Finally, in the second part of this section, I discuss the homeland complexities embedded in the diasporic identities.

Chapter 4 outlines the details of the methodology and the specific method used for conducting this study. I discuss the research design, methods, process and analysis of the research. The study draws on qualitative research methods. It focuses on a two-site, case-study approach. In this context, seventy-three in-depth, semi-structured interviews with Armenian community members were conducted in the two different cities over eleven months in 2018 and 2019. In addition to qualitative interviews, participant observation

was conducted. My findings were supported by written and visual sources such as newspapers of the organisations, their electronic bulletins and informative online videos. This chapter demonstrates how the participants were accessed and recruited for this research. It also describes the ethical considerations which were applied in the research. The chapter discusses the positionality of the researcher as an outsider and also an insider to some degree. Chapter 4 closes with a section that explains how the empirical data were analysed by employing thematic analysis and adopting a coding technique.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 are based on the self-representations and experiences of the community members as Armenians, as part of an ethnic community, and as a citizen of their host countries. Chapter 5 has three main sections. In the first, I explore how the senses of belonging of the participants manifest in their self-representations of being Armenian, considering demographic and generational differences. In the second section, I focus on the internal and external boundaries which render the subjective and collective forms of identity distinctive. Here, differences deriving from geographical diversity and a concomitant cultural and political variety come to the fore in defining Armenianness. In the chapter's final section, I consider experiences of being simultaneously an Armenian and an American or Canadian. This section thus concentrates on the ambiguities of identity for those who feel torn between two belongings.

Chapter 6 shows how manifestations of identity are active in, and fostered by, particular diasporic spaces. The chapter first indicates how the Armenians create their diasporic spaces and how they operationalise them to sustain their identities. This chapter scrutinises the preferences, priorities and motivations of community members when they involve themselves in community affairs. The chapter presents new trends in the expression of identity and demonstrates how community members connect with the homeland. The chapter emphasises the multiplicity of engagements of community members, in line with their multiple affiliations.

Chapter 7 focuses specifically on the emotional and physical attachments felt to modern Armenia. By discussing the importance of the homeland to diaspora Armenians I indicate the differences in their understanding of home and homeland, which reflect the particular cultural and political associations of community members. In this chapter, I

also argue that diasporic sensibility on behalf of Nagorno-Karabakh improves Armenians' political sense of belonging. Even amongst native-born Armenians whose Armenianness does not fully reflect the traditional forms of their ancestors, the conflict evokes echoes of traumatic narratives about the 1915 deportation, preserving a shared sense of identity.

Finally, Chapter 8 outlines the main arguments of the thesis by summarising the main points of the chapters and demonstrates the value of the research findings. It also evaluates the thesis's contribution to the wider literature on the Armenian diaspora in particular, and on diasporas in general.

## Chapter 2. Theoretical framework: discussions on diaspora, transnationalism, diaspora nationalism and belonging

### 2.1 Introduction

In this section, I will present a detailed discussion regarding the interrelated concepts of diaspora, transnationalism and nationalism to frame a useful conceptual foundation for my research. Firstly, I consider previous discussions of the term diaspora and outline my approach to the term. Following this, I will highlight the concept of transnationalism and indicate the parallel points between diaspora and transnationalism. Then, I will briefly discuss long-distance nationalism as a form of transnational practice. I will also touch upon the sense of belonging to the Armenian identity components, which evokes transnational practices and engagement in community affairs in diaspora spaces which are significant in the analysis of intergenerational, multicultural attachments of community members and of intra-community divisions.

### 2.2 Debates on the term diaspora

The scholarly debates on the concept of diaspora have burgeoned since the beginning of the 1990s. Diaspora is a concept that stands for a specific group of people who have dispersed over at least two places in the world. The term is in a classical sense associated with the Jewish dispersion resulting from Babylonian Captivity after the destruction of the Temple which was enshrined in Old City in Jerusalem (Cohen, 1996, pp.508-509). Therefore, their dispersals and diasporic conditions are identified as a traumatic turning point and its concomitant exile. Etymologically, the concept indicates the dispersion in the Greek translation of the Bible and it means 'to sow widely' (Cohen, 1996, p.507). The word dispersion is "derived from the Greek term *diasperien*, from *dia-*, 'across' and *-sperien*, 'to sow or scatter seeds'" (Braziel and Mannur, 2003, p.1). Dufoix (2008, p.4) shows the use of verb *diasperio, w*hich has the same origin as *diasperien*, in the works of Sophocles, Herodotus and Thucydides in the fifth century BC. The term diaspora is

first used in the *Septuagint,* which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures to define Hellenic Jewish communities who live in Alexandria as exiles (Braziel and Mannur, 2003, p.1). Although this term is used for Jewish people who live outside of their ancestral land of Palestine, Cohen (1996, p.507) draws attention to its early use by the Greeks to describe the colonisation of Asia Minor and the Mediterranean in the Archaic Period in 600-800 BC.

The term respectively corresponds to *spurk* in Armenian and interrelates to the term *gahgut* inspired by Jewish experience and referring to community in exile (Tölölyan, 1996a). Malkki (1992, p.28) draws attention to an arborescent metaphor while defining the territorial root of a particular people who dispersed all over the world. This type of metaphor refers to genealogical links through which national and cultural identity are territorialised which Malkki (1992) challenges.

Although the term firstly applied to the Jewish community, which was regarded as the primary diasporic community, the meaning of diaspora has become more diverse over time, reflecting differences in the circumstances of the dispersal of particular ethnic groups. The term has thus been employed to define other communities, in particular the Armenians and Africans. The African diaspora dispersed mostly around the Americas, Europe, Asia and the Middle East. Africa established trade routes with Europe before the Greco-Roman eras (Blakely, 1999). The slave trade expanded this geographical arena as millions of Africans were transported across the Atlantic from the late fifteenth until the nineteenth century (Yelvington, 2004, p.24). In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the African slave trade peaked due to the Omani Arab occupation of the island of Zanzibar and some parts of the Swahili coast via Indian Ocean trade, and hence there have been African communities in India, Pakistan, Arabia, Iraq, Iran, and Oman (Harris, 1971, cited in Akyeampong, 2000, p.190).

Another classic diaspora example is the Armenian diaspora, whose dispersion dates back to the late fourth century AD (Adalian, 1989, cited in Tölölyan, 2004, p.37). However, the turning point in establishing a victim diaspora of Armenian people is the massacres of the late nineteenth century and the deportation conducted by the Ottoman government during 1915-1916 (Cohen, 2008). In this regard, in common with the earlier Jewish

experience, the Armenian diaspora shares the trauma of the forced movement of Africans caused by the slave trade. Armenians' forced migration as a consequence of the domination of their homeland by alien dynasties can be traced back to the seventh century (Dadoyan, 2002, p.81) Therefore, Armenians created new diaspora centres in America, Russia, Europe, parts of Africa, India and the Middle East with both voluntary and forced dislocations (Pattie, 2005b, p.53). When looking at these examples, it may be thought that the term diaspora derives only from traumatic origins. However, Smart (1987, p.288) argues that people migrate without any experience of oppressive, such as Algerians in France or Turkish people in Germany. The migration for many is a reflection of economic attraction. Therefore, diaspora communities may emerge for economic reasons, which is also relevant to the development of Armenian trading networks from Isfahan to Amsterdam and London, and from the Levant to the Indian Subcontinent (Mentz, 2004, p.16).

Even though Armenian or African communities are the best-known examples of the concept of diaspora, it is necessary to restate that according to Safran (1991, p.84), the Jewish diaspora forms the "ideal type" of the notion, or what Armstrong (1976) calls an "archetypal" diaspora. Nevertheless, the scope of the term has increased in the light of new migration movements. It is now used for numerous groups such as Chinese, Irish, Palestinian, Turks, Maghrebis and Indian communities. Accordingly, the necessity of outlining the notion arises. Therefore, its several characteristics, which can be applied to particular groups living outside the homeland, are defined to be able to make some generalisations and revised by various critical perspectives.

*Defining the term diaspora*

Dufoix (2008, pp.16-17) states that until the 1950s, the term diaspora almost exclusively referred to a community with a shared religion, and draws attention to its one exception, and adds that in the 1931 edition of the Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, Simon Dubnov, used the term without any religious implication or reference to its Jewish background. According to his definition, the notion of diaspora describes a nation, or a part of a nation, who live outside their homelands as a result of dispersing into other nations, yet who preserve their national culture amidst other societies. Following this, in

1939 Robert Park and in 1949 Rose Hum Lee expanded the notion of diaspora to include Asian people living outside their homelands (Dufoix, 2008, p.18).

In the 1980s considerable effort was put into clarifying the notion of diaspora in the social sciences (Brubaker, 2005, p.1). Before this period, the first diaspora classification stemmed from Armstrong (1976), while Sheffer's (1986) theoretical approaches enabled the comparison of modern diasporas (Dufoix, 2008, p.20). Since the mid-1990s, the use of the term has proliferated, often with reference to broader terms such as expatriate, refugee, immigrant (Brubaker, 2005, p.1). Thus, the concept was in "danger of becoming a promiscuously capacious category" (Tölölyan, 1996a, p.8); "the meaning of term dispersed to semantic, conceptual and disciplinary space"; which is identified as 'diaspora' diaspora (Brubaker, 2005, p.1). In this context, the term diaspora can be debated with its features using Dufoix's three definitions of the term: open, categorical, and oxymoronic (Dufoix, 2008, p.21).

*Open definitions*

This type of definition represents a very loose and a "limited step" for broad theoretical debates of diaspora (Armstrong, 1976, p.393). The first example of an open definition of the term diaspora was presented in Armstrong's 1976 article, in which the concept refers to any ethnic communities without a territorial base; this definition includes several groups from pastoral nomads to semi-tribal communities (1976, p.393). Following this preliminary description of the notion, Conner (1986, p.16) presents another broad definition: diasporas is a group of individuals who live outside their ethnic homeland. Similarly, this definition categorises different groups of people under the term diaspora. Sheffer (1986, p.3) adds a further point to the definition of people living as diaspora: preservation of their identity in the host countries. According to Sheffer (1986, p.3), "modern diasporas are ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining the strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin – their homelands". The author mostly emphasises the role of different instruments that members of a group use to connect with their origins. Tölölyan (1991, pp.4-6) argues that the increase in the migration movement led to a proliferation of diasporas in the world and the need to redefine their roles in the international context.

Therefore, Tölölyan (1991, pp.4-6) regards diaspora communities as transnational conduits between their homelands and host countries and draws attention to their political, ideological and financial aid for their homelands. While Tölölyan emphasises the international role of diasporas, the scope of the concept as he conceptualises it also includes numerous categories such as expatriate, refugee, guestworker, exile and overseas communities (Tölölyan, 1991, p.4).

A more detailed and specific explanation of the term diaspora is therefore needed, which leads us to categorical definitions.

*Categorical definitions*

The categorical definitional approach aims to analyse some groups that have the potential to be diaspora groups by listing several features which diaspora communities convey. Safran (1991, pp.83-84) identifies the common features of diaspora groups, they aim to apply the concept of diaspora to people who live outside the homeland, focusing on six features:

i.   dispersion from an original "centre" to two or more "peripheral" or foreign regions;
ii.  collective memory including myths about the original homeland;
iii. a belief in not being fully accepted by their host societies and associated feelings of alienation;
iv.  perception of ancestral land as the true, ideal home and the place to which they or their descendants will eventually return;
v.   a conviction of the necessity to commit to maintenance of the homeland and to its safety and prosperity;
vi.  having relations in any form to that homeland and their ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity.

Consequently, the notion of diaspora in this definition reflects an ideal type. However, the experiences and the perceptions of group members about their community, identity, homeland and host land may be different from each other. As in the case of the return of the Jewish community to the holy lands, their origins, which are idealised, Safran (1991, p.84) questions whether diaspora members can really return to the homeland. In some

cases, the homeland may have changed since they left: the return to homeland thus becomes a myth. Furthermore, certain beliefs consolidate this myth. Before the advent of the Messiah, a physical return to the "homeland" was regarded as an anathema by many religious Jews; the myth of return has an eschatological basis for religious Jewish communities (Safran, 1991, p.91). Nevertheless, with the establishment of Israel, the physical return was actualised for some of the Jewish diasporas. As is seen in other diaspora examples, such as the African diaspora, the homeland is a problematic and contested entity (Cohen, 1995, p.11). The notion of homeland for Armenians is also a highly contested issue, which will be scrutinised in a later chapter.

Existing scholarship has reviewed Safran's list in line with the contemporary developments in migratory movements. Moreover, with the increase in global mobility, new approaches have emerged to the identification of the term diaspora in the modern era, prompting scholars including Safran (2005a; 2007) to revise older perspectives on the notion of diaspora. Cohen (1996, p.515; 2008, p.17), adds several ideas to Safran's list. One refers to the reason for the dispersion. The dispersion can either be the result of a search for work or the pursuit of trade (Cohen, 2008, p.17). Likewise, Sheffer (2003, pp.9-10) argues that voluntary migrations have a role in the emergence of diasporas. Nevertheless, certain conditions in the homeland may force a group of people into migration. These migratory movements may not be driven by the actions of a nation-state but may be the results of inequalities in economic and social conditions. Therefore, unemployment, poverty, and famine can be reasons for the forced relocations of some communities (Kalra et al., 2005, p.11).

Safran's list has been expanded in relation to another feature of diaspora: the tie with the homeland. Safran (1991) argues that the relation between the homeland and diaspora is crucial for ethno-communal consciousness and the solidarity of diaspora communities. According to Cohen (2008, p.17), as much as diaspora communities have a sense of an ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity with their cognates in the homeland, they also may sustain a sense of affinity with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement. Likewise, Sheffer (2003, pp.9-10) emphasises the connection of ethno-national diasporas with populations of the same origin living in other host countries in cultural, political, economic, and social spheres; and that the members of a diaspora may

have an active role in establishing trans-state networks which ease communication between homelands, host lands, diasporas, and international actors.

Discussion of categorical definitions of diaspora have thus contributed to the classification of diasporas, and the typology of the notion has consequently become more varied and complicated. The classification mostly depends on the dominant features of diasporas or the main reasons which constitute diasporas. Firstly, Armstrong (1976, p.393) makes a division between the proletarian diaspora who are a "disadvantaged product of modernized polities; and the *mobilized diaspora*, an ethnic group which does not have a general status advantage, yet which enjoys many material and cultural advantages compared to other groups in the multiethnic polity". According to Sheffer (2003, p.252) this distinction reflects an assumption that poor immigrants who are "driven out of their homeland" form poorer and less mobilised diasporas, and indicates that "poorer and richer incipient state-linked diasporas mobilize, organize, and function similarly". The proletarian diasporas are usually created by guest workers and they are at the incipient stage of their existence compared to mobilised diasporas (Sheffer, 1986, p.8). Therefore, this typology focuses on economic reasons which lead a diaspora group to disperse. Sheffer (2003, p.252) adds a "working hypothesis" which assumes that the power of basic motivations for dispersal from the homeland in determining the essence of the group in host countries is open to debate. Moreover, Sheffer (1986, p.8) argues that proletarian diasporas gain relatively advantaged positions by establishing and mobilising themselves rapidly through trans-state networks.

Sheffer (2003, p.23) contributes to the discussion of typologies of diaspora by distinguishing "state-linked and stateless" diaspora groups. This distinction comes into prominence in debates about homeland-diaspora relations. While some stateless diaspora members tend to assimilate to the country where they reside in, some members could be nationalist, seeking an independent nation-state with which to link their identity. According to Sheffer (2003, p.154), once they have a status of state-linked diaspora, political priorities change in their relations with the host countries to 'feel at home abroad'. Stateless diasporas mostly describe the case where the homeland is unknown or when a diaspora is governed by another nation. The Kurdish diaspora is an example of a community whose putative territory is governed by another nation. Furthermore, there

are some groups whose homeland has been occupied and dominated by another state, such as in the case of the Palestinians and Tibetans and the Jews before 1948 (Sheffer, 2003, p.148). Gipsies are another example of stateless diasporas as they have never had a homeland (Sheffer, 2003, p.148).

Reis (2004, p.42) prefers to divide diasporas into three main phases which shaped the form and experience of diasporas throughout the world. These are the Classical Period (which saw the first emergence of Jewish and Greek diasporas), the Modern Period (the age of slavery and colonization) and the Contemporary or Late-modern Period (since World War II). The classification is redefined by subdividing the Modern Period into three parts: 1) the expansion of European capital (1500-1814), 2) the Industrial Revolution (1815-1914), and 3) the Interwar Period (1914-1945). Reis mostly focuses on the Classical and Contemporary periods. Diasporas mostly result from exile in the Classical Era. By contrast, in the Contemporary Period, following developments in communication and transportation systems, diasporas have become much more globalised. The reasons for dispersal have also multiplied in this era. This establishes a foundation emerging new diaspora groups, which are incipient diasporas in Sheffer's terms (2003, p.148). Reis's approach, in this sense, highlights changing perceptions of the nature of diasporas in today's world.

Cohen (2008) classifies diasporas by focusing on reasons for the first dispersion, which are taken to determine the nature of diasporas. While this classification is open to criticism in many aspects, it is possible to say that it reflects the dominant feature of the diasporas when they emerge. Cohen (2008, p.18) divides diasporas into five dimensions: i) victim diasporas (e.g. Jewish, Armenian, African); ii) labour diasporas or "proletarian diaspora" in Armstrong's conceptualisation (1976) (e.g. Indian, Turkish); iii) imperial diaspora of the powerful nation-states (e.g. British, Portuguese); iv) trade diasporas (e.g. Chinese, Lebanese, Armenian merchant families' trade networks in the fourteenth century from Central Asia to Italian city-states, see Panossian, 2006, p.61); and v) deterritorialised diasporas (e.g. Caribbeans, Kurdish communities, see Alinia, 2004).

Another categorical definition, distinguishing different kinds of diasporas is presented by Butler (2001, pp.199-202), who, like Cohen, categorises diaspora groups to

understand how a diaspora and its particular "cultural ethos", or imaginations of community is shaped by the circumstances of their dispersions. Butler identified the following reasons for dispersal: i) captivity including enslavement; ii) state-eradication exile through colonial conquest; iii) forced and voluntary exile in the context of the existence of a homeland. In these cases, the relation between exiles and homeland depends on the conditions in the homeland. Emigration refers to "definite separation" from the origin country, mostly for economic reasons. This, according to Butler, is distinct from migration, in which migrating individuals may travel between their homeland and new settlements and form ethnonational-specific networks in the host land (e.g. seasonal workers); and imperial diaspora, in which a powerful homeland sends its citizens to impose its political, economic, and cultural control on subject peoples (e.g. the Ottomans). The dispersion of the Armenians reflects more than one type of reason for dispersion. However, reflecting Butler's categorisation, the Armenian diasporic identity is primarily shaped around "forced exile".

Although these categorisations seem useful as a convenient typology of diasporas, they have been subject to criticism. For example, Anthias (1998, p.563) argues that Cohen's categories are inadequate for the analysis of different dimensions of a diaspora group. The causes of dispersion are not adequate to categorise diaspora groups under a particular heading. However, Cohen draws attention to an approach that acknowledges that some communities (or deterritorialised diasporas) may be considered as part of other diasporas; as in the case of Caribbean communities, African victim diaspora, the Indian labour diaspora, various European imperial diasporas and the Lebanese trade diaspora (Cohen, 2008, pp.124-125). Cohen (2008, p.4) states that initial categorisations are "either self-affirmed or accepted by outside observers" to define the "*predominant*" (italics in original) feature of the group. Butler also acknowledges that actual diasporas are not easily categorised. Thus, it is possible to classify diasporas as subcategories, such as victim diasporas and labour diasporas. Meanwhile, with his last classification of diaspora, Cohen comes close to Hall's (1990) approach which assumes that the diaspora identity is not strictly connected to a real or putative homeland or common cultures; rather, it is shaped by difference, hybridity, heterogeneity. Therefore, categorical definitions emerge as "bounded" by a fixed "place, time, identity, community and

nation-state" approach which does not accommodate the dynamic and heterogeneous nature of communities, who are naturally associated with an ethnically demarcated place (Mavroudi, 2007, pp.469-470). The oxymoronic definitions of the word diaspora thus represent a potential conceptual advance, enabling the exploration of the internal complexities of a particular community.

*Oxymoronic definitions*

Dufoix (2008, p.23) indicates that these definitions of diaspora emerged in the 1980s amidst postmodernist debates about the term. In light of these debates, the idea that diaspora communities come from a constant, specific and central essence has been criticised. The multifaceted components of diaspora are stressed by drawing attention to several self-representations in a diaspora. Each diaspora member of a particular group may have different experiences, stories, and memories about ethnic identity, although they sustain common links with their homeland. Several factors influence diaspora members when developing awareness of their identities. The date of migration to the host country, their departure point, the length of settlement in the host country, the reason for migrating are important factors shaping the diasporic identity. Therefore, one of the common features of the notion of diaspora is that group members produce multiple identities. Mavroudi (2007, p.472) states that the shared opinion of these approaches, which the author refers to as the "unbounded" perspective of the diaspora concept, is to "stress the incomplete, unstable and fluid nature of identities, and cultures generally, insisting on the fallacy of claims of authenticity and hegemonic, artificial, all-encompassing boundaries put around people, nation-states, communities and identities".

Vertovec (1997, pp.277-278) argues that the term diaspora refers to three aspects: the diaspora as social form, the diaspora as type of consciousness, and the diaspora as mode of cultural production. The term diaspora as a social form, which is shaped by a "triadic relationship" of "collectively self-identified" dispersed ethnic group, host land and homeland (Vertovec, 1997, p.279), has some common points for diaspora as social category. First, social form refers to specific social relationships amongst individuals regarding common history, geographic origin and networks which communicate with the homeland through "explicit and implicit ties" and the co-ethnic members in other

countries. This category thus indicates a sense of being different in the host country (whether in negative or positive terms), which derives from not being "fully" accepted by the country of residences (Vertovec, 1997, pp.278-279). Second, the type of social form refers to tension in political orientation amongst diasporic peoples between their loyalty to the homeland and the host land. Finally, this type includes some economic strategies of diasporic groups which steer transnational finance and commerce amongst co-ethnics (Vertovec, 1997, p.279).

Vertovec's conceptualisation of diaspora as a social form may refer to open definitions of the diaspora. However, the author transcends the essentialist and static approaches of the diaspora concept with discussions within the diaspora as type of consciousness and mode of cultural production, which I will detail throughout arguments below which stress the constructive, hybrid and processual nature of the diasporic state of mind towards place-attachment and its concomitant identity production.

The existence of distinctive perspectives on the roots of diaspora members and of associated multiple identities leads the discussion to the third approach to defining the concept of diaspora. Scholars who adopt oxymoronic approaches emphasise that diaspora identity is independent of a particular territory: the homeland is not necessarily the main reference point determining the group's diaspora identity. Thus, the homeland and the ethnic/religious community, which are putative main components for a diaspora community, have certain limitations in the definition of the term. The notion itself has a flexible nature because the identities of the members composing a diaspora are reconstructed in a hybrid way.

Cohen (2008, p.1) states that classical, open and categorical definitions of the term were criticised by postmodern debates. The main criticism in this phase targets the notion of homeland, claiming that theorists unduly emphasise the issue of the homeland and ethnic or religious community in the construction of a diaspora. Hall (1990) underlines different positioning in the identity construction of diasporic groups. According to this argument, there are no "common features" that are necessary for a group to be a diaspora. According to Hall (1990, p.235), the diaspora identity cannot be understood in the context of a sacred territory representing the origin. Hall (1990, p.225) emphasises that

the cultural identity is always exposed to a transformation: a diaspora community is shaped by this hybrid cultural identity. Therefore, Hall (1990, p.226) regards diaspora as a reconstruction of the cultural identity, and emphasises that there is no fixed origin "which we can make some final". Concordantly, Clifford (1994, p.305) indicates that some diasporas regard more than one territory as their homeland. For example, the Sephardi Jews, after 1492, were as attached to urban Spain as their homeland, as to the Holy Land (Clifford, 1994, p.305). Thus, Safran's first criterion assuming that each diaspora disperses from a single origin is contested.

Clifford (1994, p.306) states that "transnational connections linking diasporas need not be articulated primarily through a real or symbolic homeland". This does not mean that these communities do not have a homeland, but that all members in a diaspora do not have to refer to the homeland while defining their ethnic identity. In turn, diaspora members in a particular group can develop different identities from each other. In other words, diasporic people are a kind of "seed" which is "similar, but not identical" and "they take root in different places" (Gilroy, 1997, p.332). According to Brah (1997, p.192), the perception of "home", or homeland, is flexible and depends on subjective experiences.

Another example regarding the ambiguity of the homeland is found in Tölölyan's (2012, p.10) anecdote of a conference he attended. The author quotes a Jewish-American associate professor who regarded the USA as her and her parent's home and her main focus for political or social concerns, although her grandparents' home was Hungary. At the same time, she stated that Israel, as the point of origin of her ancestors and their homeland, not hers, has secondary importance for her, after the USA. In addition to personal experiences of the dispersed individuals, their relationship with the host land and their country of origin can reflect generation differences, which sometimes play a major role in identifying where is the 'home' and 'homeland'.  In some situations, even the homeland itself is lost or changed.

In the case of the Jewish diaspora, Marienstras (1989, pp.362-363) argues that the Holocaust formed a basis for the diaspora around the world to have a common destiny. However, Boyarin and Boyarin (1993, p.722) highlight that the Jewish diaspora is not

exclusively a product of war and destruction. Instead, a majority of Jews had already lived voluntarily outside of the Holy Land for centuries before the fall of the Judea Kingdom. Therefore, as the authors (1993, p.722) state, in the Jewish diaspora, genealogical links may have much more impact on the consciousness of diasporas than the idea of homeland. Butler (2001, p.192) underlines a feature of temporal-historical dimension for a diaspora: the existence of a group over at least two generations in a host land. Butler (2001, p.192) remarks individual migration experiences, the history of dispersed people and subsequent generations are significant features to define community themselves as a diaspora. Boyarin (2015) states that "homeland" cannot be a precondition for the existence of a diaspora group. As aforementioned, the homeland may refer to multiple places, from Babylonia to the Rhineland for the Jewish diaspora (Boyarin, 2015, p.5). Therefore, Boyarin (2015, pp.5, 8) stresses the importance of the study of the Babylonian Talmud, a key religious text regulating the daily life in Judaism, in substituting for the homeland as a constituent factor for the Jewish diaspora. Likewise, Yuval (2006, pp.16-19) asserts that the identity of Jewish people can be based on an "*imaginaire* of collective memory rather than on a common territory". This imagination can be a reference point to an abundance of imaginations for the deterritorialised groups to "recreate the endless desire to return 'lost origins', to be one again with the mother, to go back to the beginning" (Hall, 1990, p.236).

As aforementioned, categorical or open approaches of diaspora definitions consider referring to a homeland while defining a diaspora to be absolutely necessary. However, this necessity is open to debate in the context of the Muslim diaspora as well. Moghissi (2010, pp.2-3) highlights that Muslim groups can live in some countries as a diaspora, and draws attention to essentialist tendencies of the western governments against their Muslim populations, which bring up the issues of their integration in the host countries, "issues of human rights and democratic values". Islamophobic discourses of the host countries create ambivalence in the sense of belonging of the Muslim populations in western countries to the concept of 'home' (Buitelaar and Stock, 2010, pp.163-164).

Levitt and Glick-Schiller (2004, p.1026) remind us that religion, which is composed of a set of tenets and practices, represents a transnational form that migrants carry with themselves in their host countries. At the same time, however, some migrant groups

identify themselves with a particular religious community under the rubric of diaspora, through which they represent their religious identities in the intersectional context of transnational social fields. At this point, Levitt (2004) states that the migrants' religious practices are subject to transnational form in the country of residence, and indicates three types of transnational religious organisations, namely "extended, negotiated and recreated". The extended religious organisations, as in the case of the Catholic Irish case, refers to church attendance which promotes host-country integration, while also enabling migrants to have feelings of attachment to their sending country's national church; the negotiated religious organisations, such as Protestant religious groups, involve migrants in a growing "set of cross-border organizational arrangements" and incorporate their members' "civic engagement based on religious beliefs"; and finally recreated religious organisations, which are represented by Gujarati Hindu groups, strengthen members' attachments to their home country, frequently at the price of social integration in the receiving country (Levitt, 2004, pp.1-3).

In religion-based diasporas, the self-identification of an individual becomes prominent. Individuals, who are associated with transnational religious networks, may identify themselves as a part of a particular ethnic group in the host countries as well. In this case, their belonging to a particular place can also be contested. The question of homeland is, in this regard, deterritorialised (Anthias, 1998). Rather, homeland refers to positioning oneself in the host country. Certain members who migrated from the same territory may identify themselves with their ethnic ties; some members associate their identities with their religious affiliations, while some may regard themselves as a part of the majority in the host country. The production of diaspora identity focuses less on common territory and more on memory, or more on the "social dynamics of remembrance and commemoration" (Gilroy, 1994, p.293). This approach concurs with Vertovec's second meaning of diaspora as a type of consciousness. Vertovec emphasises a variety of experiences in the construction of a diaspora's double consciousness, referring to W.E.B. Du Bois, which leads to an "*awareness of multi locality*" or "of being simultaneously […] "here and there"" (Vertovec, 1997, pp.281-282; 2001, pp.574-575). In other words, the collective memories concerning a place do not always translate into a particular form of identity; rather, identity is constructed by "fractured memories" leading to

"multiplicity of histories, "communities" and selves" (Vertovec, 1997, p.282). At this point, Vertovec's third meaning of diaspora as a "mode of cultural production", which indicates "flow of cultural objects, images, and meanings" with the help of global communication tools, points out "the fluidity of constructed styles and identities […] that are sometimes called syncretic, creolized, "translated", "crossover", "cut 'n' mix", hybrid and "alternate" which are contested with "the politics of heritage and nostalgia" (1997, p.289; Appadurai and Breckenridge, 1989, cited in Vertovec, 1997, p.290; see also Appadurai, 1996).

Gupta and Ferguson (1992, p.7) highlight assumptions that space, place and culture are interconnected in a particular territory within national boundaries. In these assumptions, a people and their culture are only naturally represented by the country where they are rooted. However, Gupta and Ferguson (1992, pp.10-12) argue that this natural association between a place and its culture has broken and become deterritorialised. In other words, it is hard to say that a hybrid interpretation of a particular culture, which is "reterritorialized" in different places across the world is mapped onto the same cultural origin attributed to particular geographical boundaries, such as a "homeland" in the scope of this study. On the other hand, Brubaker (2005, p.12) underlines that "diaspora can be seen as an *alternative* to the essentialization of belonging; but it can also represent a non-territorial *form* of essentialized belonging". In other words, deterritorialised identity is "fundamentally the same" although it is "reconfigured" in the space beyond the boundaries of the state (Brubaker, 2005, p.12).

Brubaker's classification of diaspora can be seen as reflecting the common features of a diaspora as broadly defined in the literature, although there are several debates regarding each. Brubaker suggests three criteria that are indispensable elements of a diaspora: dispersion, homeland orientation, and boundary-maintenance (Brubaker, 2005, pp.5-6). In this definition, diaspora groups emerge because of dispersion, are linked to a real or imagined homeland which enables the production of identity construction; by depending on the latter, they tend to maintain their identity in a distinctive way amongst other groups. For example, endogamy is one of the tools for sustaining identity.

However, some members of a diaspora may prefer to define themselves as only a citizen of the country in which they live, instead of identifying as a member of a particular community. Within the community, or group, moreover, there may not be a consensus about the boundaries which establish the identity markers defining the uniqueness of the group. In a similar vein, Antonsich and Mavroudi (2015, p.162) indicate that "migrant practices, […], challenge as well as reinforce the contours of national belonging and community". The identity boundaries are thus subject to an ongoing negotiation process. There can be differences in the perception and performance of the constitutive elements of identity amongst those in a diaspora community. Mavroudi (2010, p.240) states that group solidarities, which lead to other differences being ignored, have the potential to homogenise diversities by adopting an essentialist approach, which identifies those who "fall outside certain 'idealised' ways of being and acting" as outside the group. This produces tension between boundary-maintenance and boundary-erosion (Brubaker, 2005, pp.5-6). I argue that this tension is both destructive and constructive simultaneously. For example, subsequent generations may not share the same sentiment or experience about their relative identity. In this context, the notion of post-memory can overcome the issue of boundary-erosion for a community that lives outside their culture. Post-memory defines the memory of subsequent generations who did not witness the collective trauma, but they experience this recollection through the narratives, images, memorial practices, and other ways of the representation of the community in which they grew up (Hirsch, 2008, p.106). As in the case of traumatic narratives or recollection, post-memory is an efficient tool to enable the transfer of cultural practices to subsequent generations. On the other hand, there may be those who do not construct their belonging to the diasporic identity on the traumatic narratives of the community, which construct the sameness.

Another example can be given for the country of origin. Not all members of some diaspora communities, as in the case of the Armenian diaspora, have the same country of origin. They may acknowledge their homeland as Armenia, but their place attachment in the emotional sense can vary. In this regard, the notion of diaspora or a "diasporic community" can be tackled as a flexible "process" in which identities are not fully static; rather they are negotiable, multiple, but are also constructed by shared psychical and

emotional attachments in line with Mavroudi's consideration (2007; 2010). Mavroudi (2007, pp.473-475), adopting a geographical approach, suggests that flexible applications of the notion of diaspora as a *process* enable analysis of the identity, community and nation-state of a group of people whose "structural features" depend on both "the sameness" and "on the move" within bounded and unbounded definitions of the diaspora. In a similar vein, Werbner (2002, pp.120-123) regards diasporas as chaotic orders which are based on "transnational existence and cosmopolitan consciousness" challenging fixed boundaries of the nation-state and referring to a de-centralised "command structures", but at the same time drawing upon "imagined attachments to a place of origin and/or collective historical trauma" of the dispersed communities, whose example can be founded as long-distance nationalism. Therefore, according to Werbner (2002, pp.120, 129) diasporas "are both ethnicparochial and cosmopolitan", and their engagement into a diasporic community is mostly dependent on the "sense of *moral co-responsibility*" (italics in original) for those who refer to the same group of people in the world and for the place to which they are orientated.

Contemplating diasporas in a geographical context creates new avenues by "dismantling [them] to their core" and concentrating on "the specificity of diasporic experiences" which can be linked to "everyday practices" embedded in their ongoing negotiations about place, home and homeland within the context of the tensioned, dynamic relation between Clifford's (1997) "roots and routes" and between flexible, creative and performative links "here and there" (Mavroudi and Christou, 2015, pp.1, 4; Ní Laoire, 2003, p.275). Creative and performative links can also be embodied through aesthetic interpretations of place-making and reinforcing affective attachments to the shared history, as in the activities of an African-Caribbean theatre group in Bristol (Richardson, 2015, p.16) or the organised religious and cultural engagements of members from different faiths in West London in renovating and decorating their sacred places (Gilbert et al., 2019). Intimate relations "between the spatialities and temporalities of diaspora" are intrinsic to interactions with host/home countries and migration stories and patterns in forming place-attachments, maintaining diasporic belongings through several generations, transforming and changing the "binding effect" of relations in a community and the functions of diasporic organisations (Blunt, 2015, pp.203-204; Carter, 2005,

p.57; Christou, 2011a, pp.252-253; Fischer, 2015, p.146). This intimacy enables critical scrutiny of the complex diasporic identity which emerges as a process "in-between representations and performance" (Mavroudi, 2019, pp.286-287). As Werbner (2002) says, diasporic identity can be strategically essentialist but also reflect plural identities ranging from essentialist attachments to ethnocultural or national identities of home or host countries or engaging in politics for a particular 'homeland' (Carter, 2005) to self-interpretations of identities revolving around ambivalent feelings of in-betweenness (Mavroudi, 2019, p.281). In other words, the hidden, mobile, dynamic articulations of the identity changing through time and space can be embodied in sub-cultural performances beyond 'here' and 'there', and common affinities of the group about a place or cultural traits. Divergences in culture and class within a group in the same or different environment – even within the same family based on different framings of their transnational experiences (Walton-Roberts and Pratt, 2005) or as seen in different forms of "émigré culture" through the class differences between Italian-London immigrants living in Clerkenwell, or the Hill Italians, and West End Soho Italians (Fortier, 1999, pp.41, 46) – influence the ways in which diasporas imagine and materialise their "transnational social spaces", which are mostly embedded in social relations, emotions, affective belonging and memory of the places from which they migrated (Blunt and Dowling 2006; Blunt 2007; Levin and Fincher, 2010).

Tölölyan's approach to the notion of diaspora consolidates the content of the diaspora debates, which are in danger of ambiguity (Cohen, 2008, p.1). Tölölyan (2007a, p.649) identifies distinctive features of the term to differentiate it from other dispersion forms: first, its catastrophic nature distinguishing this type of dispersion from voluntary migration; second, the preservation of the collective identity with its cultural components; and third, a link with the homeland such as travel, remittances, lobbying activities and their kin communities. Tölölyan (2007a, p.649) suggests that diaspora should be considered as "a process of collective identification and a form of identity, marked by ever-changing differences". In this regard, this perception follows Hall (1990), corresponds to Mavroudi's perspective (2007; 2019), and also refers to Vertovec's (1997) first meaning of diaspora as a social form. Tölölyan (2007a, p.650) implies that diaspora communities describe themselves as different from the majority of

the host land, but also from the people in the homeland while regarding themselves as linked to both groups. Tölölyan (2007a, p.650) goes on to argue that this state of being different is related to collective memory practices which also include identity reproduction processes and the institutionalisation of connections to the homeland, and the policies of the countries hosting the community.

To conclude, this study asserts that homeland and also a diasporic identity are constructed, and does not exclude the hybrid interpretations of the place and group attachments. The view of diaspora moves bidirectionally by being influenced by the political, social, and cultural variations of host countries and homeland. Each diaspora group has a specific agenda in the matter of self-identification. Different characteristics that shape a diaspora, such as the date of migration, the duration of a group's settlement in the host country, the settlement region, cultural features of a group, and group members' relations with the majority of the host country, homeland, and each other, may be overlooked due to the imagination of a particular diaspora as a unit. Although there are some fundamental elements for the notion of diaspora, each feature may not connote the same meaning for every member of a diasporic group. Brah (1997, p.193) highlights two different self-representation examples of two black British women of Jamaican origin. While one of them prefers to identify herself as Jamaican or Caribbean, another brings her Britishness to the forefront. Brah (1997, p.193) argues that "they articulate different political positions on the question of 'home'". Therefore, the way that articulation of the identity differs depending on how individuals or groups identify themselves. Similarly, the question of to what extent a group of people feel as a part of a diasporic community is raised. Sheffer (2003, p.100) refers to "dormant members" of a diaspora who are presented as a community that has been assimilated into the host country while also having the potential to identify as part of their diaspora and mobilise on behalf of their community and homeland with the help of diaspora leaders and organisations. It is questionable whether they call themselves diaspora members without any intervention to evoke diaspora consciousness. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the existence of several members who feel their belonging to the community at different levels.

Similarly, within the scope of my study, the heterogeneous nature of the community challenges the one-sided, checklist interpretation of the Armenian identity. Each Armenian community has developed its way of relating its belonging to the identity in the diasporic spaces. The evolution of these ways is contingent on the place and time. In other words, one can be argued that this is not a single, monolithic Armenian diaspora, but multiple diasporas. Therefore, to examine Armenian diasporic communities in two different settings as a research study is needed to understand their specific community structures, ways of engagement in these structures, ways of self-representation in relation to the dominant culture of host societies. Moreover, it is important to explore diasporic behaviour and the manifestation of the diasporic identity in different environments, because each environment has its own specificities to form a base for maintenance of the identities at different levels and ways. To this end, this study focuses on the articulations of the diasporans from different communities and generations to reveal differences, similarities, conflicted points and general tendencies concerning the components of the Armenianness. Kasbarian (2015a, p.360) regards Armenia as an "orientation" that forms a common base to unify diverse Armenian communities. This study also aims to unfold the ways in which this orientation manifests itself in the diasporic spaces and creates a unity amongst the Armenians.

Moreover, this study accepts that every transmigrant cannot be included in the category of diaspora based on sharing the same ethnic descent; it, therefore, tackles the notion of diaspora as "a category of practice" in line with Brubaker (2005). Brubaker (2005, p.12) suggest that diaspora should be considered as "an idiom, a stance, a claim" rather than confining the notion into the bounded comprehensions. Therefore, those who adopt this stance by "formulating the identities and loyalties of a population" "to articulate projects […] to mobilize energies" should be considered as a diaspora (Brubaker, 2005, p.12). Thus, it is possible to analyse under which circumstances this "stance" appears amongst some members of a particular group, who are also the focus of this study.

In the next subsection, I will present a discussion concerning the notion of transnationalism, which is intertwined with diasporic behaviour.

## 2.3  An analytical companion of diaspora: transnationalism

As previously discussed, the concept of diaspora can be used to define immigrant groups as much as other groups living outside their homeland. Vertovec and Cohen (1999, xiii) argue that the themes of migration, diaspora and transnationalism are linked to each other, referring to three principal observations to demonstrate this triadic relationship. The first observation highlights that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, many countries lifted their sanctions regarding the *exit* of their populations. Depending on this, there was an increase in *entry* implementations, especially for labour migrants and asylum seekers (italics in original). The authors state that the new forms of migration play a role as "litmus tests" to evaluate future capabilities of nationalism and transnationalism. Secondly, the increase in deterritorialised diasporas can be considered as a major outcome in migration patterns. Similarly, the existence of diasporas intimidated policy-makers who regarded multiculturalism as a threat to the construction of a nation-state. Thirdly, global networks of immigrant groups indicate the process of transnationalism, which are regarded "as a reconstruction of 'place' or 'locality'" (Vertovec and Cohen, 1999, xiii).

While the close link between the themes is acknowledged, slight differences between the concepts of an immigrant and a diasporic community are underlined by Kalra et al. (2005). They state that diaspora is a better and more flexible appellation for a particular minority group in the host country than the term immigrants (Kalra et al., 2005, p.14). For example, the naming of Algerian immigrants in France as Algerian diaspora or French-Algerians far more effectively emphasises the hybridity of their identities (Kalra et al., 2005, p.14). Kalra et al. argue that the appellation of these groups as immigrant seems inadequate since immigrant has a static connotation: diaspora has multiple constituent elements (Kalra et al., 2005, pp.14-15). It is possible to say that the term "diaspora communities" underlines the hybridity of belonging, which has emerged as a byproduct of migration.

Tölölyan (1991, p.5) defines contemporary diasporas as "exemplary communities of the transnational moments" and highlights another distinction between the categories transmigrant and diaspora. A transnational migrant is able to transform into a member

of diaspora "when its members develop some familial, cultural and social distance from their nation" while passionately maintaining their ties with it not only because of their ethnic or national attachment, because of dedication to specific "chosen affiliations" (Tölölyan, 2012, p.11). In other words, subsequent generations of a transnational group may not reflect a full attachment to the home country and its attendant identity markers, but still, they may feel attached to relevant identity components by developing a selective attitude about which aspects of the identity they adopt. One of the key bases of belongings is homeland; this is widely accepted in studies regarding minority populations in a host country. As aforementioned, the homeland implies a returning phenomenon for diasporic communities in general; however, a diasporic sensibility may disappear in the second and third generations.

Anthias (1998, p.569) argues that some nations avoid using the term diaspora to define their emigrants because it is considered that the term has a subversive connotation in the context of nation-state construction. According to Anthias (1998, p.569), Cyprus prefers to call Cypriots living abroad "migrants" instead of diaspora, since the notion of diaspora connotes a loss of identity and unlikelihood of return. In this regard, it is seen that the term diaspora implies that the group is more settled in the host country than immigrants. This concrete settlement may indicate a rupture in identity. Although subsequent generations feed on the narratives of previous generations regarding their ethnic belonging; over time, this link may loosen. However, "the question of whether migrant integration, on the one hand, and cultural distinctions, on the other hand, may coexist" is often asked, particularly concerning the recent use of the term diaspora (Faist, 2010, p.13). Therefore, diasporic identity exhibits diversity and heterogeneity or "bicultural competence" (Hall, 1990, p.235; Tölölyan, 2012, p.11).

Diasporic groups as "exemplary communities of transnational moments" are much more concrete in the context of networks built by transmigrants. Transmigrants, who leave their country to settle in another place for a variety of reasons, accommodate themselves to the economic, cultural, and political structures and practices of their host country (Glick Schiller et al., 1995, p.48). At the same time, they build their social fields, to sustain their cultural, political and economic relationships with their homeland; this construction is embodied in a process called transnationalism (Glick Schiller et al., 1994,

p.7) The construction of social networks, which span borders and emphasise the need for the reconceptualisation of categories of ethnicity, national identity and race of transnational migrants, within the context of developments in global capitalism, is embedded in daily lives of immigrants (Glick Schiller et al., 1992, pp.26-30, 37).

Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004, p.1003) state that "reformulation of the concept of society" is important in transnational migration studies on the grounds that migrants' ways of experiencing their national/ethnic identities are not limited to the borders of a nation-state. The authors (2004, p.1003) argue that "multi-layered, multi-sided transnational social fields" exist in their articulations and manifestations. In other words, while transmigrants engage with the destination country's socio-cultural practices and institutions, they are also able to involve themselves in transnational interactions with their country of origin or a group of people with the same ethnic or religious descent. That is to say, there is a "simultaneity" (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004, p.1003). Similarly, Van Hear (2015) indicates the spheres where transnational practices are manifested. Transnational social fields are represented from the households to the level of organisational forms such as international non-governmental and inter-governmental organisations, and their related media platforms. According to Van Hear (2015, pp.32-35), the diasporic transnational activities are divided into intersected three spheres: the first sphere indicates the personal/private domain of the individuals and their families, such as sending remittance to their families in the homeland. Regular communications with phone calls, more recently through online means should be added to transnational interaction with the homeland and their affinities. Van Hear (2015, pp.32-34) illustrates that the second sphere refers to the "known community sphere" where collective interactions take place publicly such as schools, churches, workplaces and other fora in the ethnic and cultural realm where the community life and philanthropic transnational activities on behalf of homeland occur. The third sphere implies a larger unit consisting of ethnic, national or cultural subjecthood and connections in which political activism for their "imagined communities" occurs, and place(s) with which they have allegiances and emotional attachment. Therefore, within these overlapping spaces, the transnational ties linking the migrants with their ethnic, religious or cultural allegiances become embodied in a matrix that consists of multiple local, national, transnational and global

domains (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004, pp.1009-1010). In other words, any practices or interactions occurring in the local and embedded in the everyday lives of migrants may refer to a transnational sphere.

In a similar vein, Vertovec's triad can be useful in addressing the transnational practices and engagements of the individuals. Vertovec (2015, pp.10-11) proposes that diversity studies should include two separate, but inextricably linked, research themes: the theme of *modes of social differentiation* (italics in original) which investigates how differentiation categories, such as race, gender and so on, are "constructed, manifested, utilized, internalized, socially reproduced" and the theme of *complex social environments* (italics in original), which researches on how social relations develop within the environment of various categories in a particular "mode of difference", as well as focusing on the interactions of various "modes of difference" in a particular site. In this context, Vertovec (2015, p.15) suggests an analytical triad, namely "configurations-representations-encounters" which the author argues "should nevertheless be considered together" to understand "modes of differentiation" and their connections with "complex social environments". Vertovec (2015, p.15) explains each domain as follows: 1) *Configurations* relate to structural circumstances, which include political, economic, administrative conditions that permit or hinder individuals' feasibility regarding social or psychical mobilities, in which individuals live; 2) *Representations* refer to a set of discursive practices, which are embedded in the power relations of societies, by which the individual define and construct themselves, and, others; 3) *Encounters* points out "actual human interactions" which enact within the daily interactions and social networks. Within this framework, Chaloyan (2017, pp.46-50) conceptualises configurations as "transnational social and local-diasporic fields"[2]; representations as

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[2] Local-diasporic fields in Chaloyan's study (2017, pp.100-102) refer to in-border communications of an immigrant group. These fields also relate to transnational practices while the dynamics taking place in these fields occur within the borders of host countries. The engagements in local-diasporic fields connote "transnational aspects of ties manifest in the imagination" rather than real cross-border practices (Chaloyan, 2017, p.100).

social actors' self-identification as well as their identifications of others; finally, the author defines encounters as in and cross-border "transnational practices".

The relations between places evoke the notion of translocality. Appadurai (1996, pp.178-179) discusses the term in the context of the relation between the concept of locality which he regards "as an aspect of social life" and *neighbourhood(s)* [emphasis added] that are seen by Appadurai as contextual "situated communities" and "social forms in which locality […] is variably realized". According to Appadurai (1996, p.183), "neighbourhood" implies *ethnoscape* (italics in original), which he uses to indicate that group identities in this -scape do not have to be tackled as "spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious, or ethnically homogenous". In this context, "displaced, deterritorialized and transient populations that constitute today's ethnoscapes are engaged in the construction of locality, as a structure of feeling" create their local subjectivities in neighbourhoods, which can be called *translocalities* (italics in original); and they may also produce "virtual neighborhoods" through electronically mediated communications which transcend nation-states (Appadurai, 1996, pp.192, 195, 199).

The term translocality is occasionally used as a synonym for transnationalism, but it aims to "overcome the latter's focus on the nation-state" (Greiner and Sakdapolrak, 2013, pp.373, 380). According to Barkan (2004, p.345, cited in Christou, 2011b, p.147), transnationalism emphasises "simultaneity, persistence and intensity of contact/participation across boundaries" whereas, translocality demonstrates "dual social action whereupon the 'here and there' continue to exist and emotional ties persist". Brickell and Datta (2011, p.3) state that the notion of translocality, as "a form of 'grounded transnationalism'", indicates how "social relationships across locales shape transnational migrant networks, economic exchanges and diasporic space". Brickell and Datta (2011, p.4) regard translocal practices "as a simultaneous situatedness across different locales" including rural-urban or periphery-core interactions, which are embodied in migrants' everyday experiences.

Ley (2004, p.155) states that everyday life reflects a combination of the global and the local, by demonstrating migrants' feeling of a "polycentredness". However, the polycentredness, in the context of translocality, is not only embodied in ethnically

defined districts; it also becomes concreted or visualised with the production of various "socio-spatial configurations" including "media-use and knowledge transfer" (Greiner and Sakdapolrak, 2013, p.378). Moreover, in some cases, the concept of translocality involves those who do not migrate. The lives of some of these people may be "connected to and interdependently woven with the lives of those who" migrate as they become "left-behind non-migrant family members" through translocal connections (Tan and Yeoh, 2011, pp.42, 53). For those who migrate, translocality affects their diasporic identities in an intergenerational way and produces "new narratives of migrancy" which deconstruct the immigrant experience and stories of the first-generations and reshape second-generations' perception about the country of origin (Christou, 2011b, p.146). Subsequent generations thus locate themselves into the 'home' country or homeland in different ways.

Dufoix (2008, p.29) underlines that "the globalization of migratory space" which supports the emergence of the diasporas, disproves a unidirectional relation between the homeland and host land. Lukose (2007) highlights the existence of a dialogue between diaspora studies and the category of immigrants: diaspora studies refer to "the importance of alternative and plural trajectories and imaginations of culture and identity in the lives of migrants" (Lukose, 2007, p.411). In a similar vein, Kalra et al. (2005, p.16) argue that diaspora studies produce complementary arguments for the study of immigration even though these represent certain dimensions between two categories. In the light of these points, a diasporic group can be identified as a subset of a transnational community (Başer, 2013, p.81) conducting transnational practices, which may translate into *long-distance nationalism* (Anderson, 1998), through its social, political and economic networks by engaging in its transnational social and local-diasporic fields. In this regard, this study offers an insight into how Armenians' transnational performances reconstruct their diasporic identities.

## 2.4  Nationalism and diaspora

The sense of nation as a modern concept refers to a particular community whose members are linked to each other through a common language, culture, myths, historical

narratives and ethnic ties within a particular land. According to Smith (1998, p.146), "before the modern epoch, nations were largely unknown, and human beings had a multiplicity of collective loyalties; religious communities, cities, empires". With the development of the modern state, nationalism is constituted as one of the sources of legitimacy in the political system. Although Gellner (1983, p.1) regards nationalism as "a theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones", in the past four decades, with the massive migration waves, the sphere of influence of nationalism has changed. Nation-states are not a single reference point for dispersed people in terms of place attachment, or sense of feeling of part of the same "imagined communities" or "collective identity" (Jones and Krzyżanowski, 2008, p.42). In a similar vein, Tölölyan (1991, p.4) argues that "nation-states may not always be the most effective or legitimate units of collective organization" and transnationalism and globalist forces have a role in this change.

Although there are multiple interpretations of the meaning of the national and membership of the nation in both "notion and practice" (Antonsich and Mavroudi, 2015, p.160), diaspora nationalism emerges as a different form of nationalism under the name of long-distance nationalism, which motivates a group of people to act on behalf of the same "cause". This type of nationalism forms a ground for the establishment of political or voluntary organisations, political movements or state structures (Motyl, 2001, p.126), which may impact on "nation-building or national transformation" processes (Levitt and Schiller, 2004, p.1014). In this sense, diasporas, according to Werbner (2002, p.125), are representations of interconnected cultural, political, and humanitarian sentimental *performances* (italics in original). Especially in western host countries; thanks to the rights to and freedom of speech and where they enjoy formal citizenship status; they have the opportunity to create a specific space in order to articulate and develop their own identity via different organisations. Moreover, the development in technology leads diasporic people to create their instruments of communication. Khayati (2008, p.36) highlights this power calling it diasporic media. By using this tool, communities that have common belongings are able to produce a collective identity. Similarly, Alinia (2004, p.194) underlines the importance of Kurdish communication media for transnational contact with their cognates. As an example, MED-TV, one of the satellite

television stations of the Kurdish diaspora, had an important voice in the consolidation of Kurdish nationalism (van Bruinessen, 1998). Similarly, this practice can be read in the context of the strength of print media which Anderson (2006) views as important in the emergence of a nation as a particular unit. There are significant examples in nineteenth-century North America or Europe of how printed media mobilised immigrants on behalf of their country of origin; as in the case of Armenian communities abroad and their incipient printed media tools in the late nineteenth century (Mirak, 1983; Kaprielian-Churchill, 2005).

The political activities amongst the communities of diaspora peoples, which span traditional borders, are also labelled as "political transnational practices" by Østergaard-Nielsen (2003). These practices consist of different forms of direct participation of transnationals in homeland politics "(such as voting and other support to political parties, participating in debates in the press), as well as their indirect participation via the political institutions of the host country (or international organizations)" (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003, p.762). Anderson (1998) considers that long-distance nationalism is a product of post-industrial capitalism, which leads to massive migration waves. The communities that have organised around a specific identity act as a pressure group in the internal politics of their homelands, in which they do not reside. Therefore, they are defined as "the paradigmatic Other of the nation-state" (Tölöyan, 1991, p.5). Anderson (1998, pp.73-74) draws attention to how various diaspora groups shape or support the domestic and foreign agendas of their home countries. Tamil diaspora nationalism, for example, supported the Tamil Tigers in their dis-unionist aspiration in Sri Lanka. Elsewhere, the funds and weapons provided by certain factions of the Armenian diaspora for the Armenian-Azerbaijan conflict can be seen as alternative examples of long-distance nationalism. In addition to political activities aimed at homeland politics, diaspora groups attempt, in the context of long-distance nationalism, to influence a host country's foreign policies in favour of their homeland or cognates.

The intervention in homeland affairs from long-distance does not necessarily have to be for extremist purposes as in the case of the Tamil diaspora. The global Armenian diaspora promoted solidarity concerning the devastating 1988 Spitak earthquake in Armenia (Dufoix, 2008, p.94). Furthermore, there are educational initiatives that are

organised by some philanthropists to preserve a collective sense of identity. The Taglit-Birthright Israel programme as a "diasporization strategy" (Abramson, 2017) for example enables young diaspora members who may be in danger of losing their Jewish identity to discover their "homeland", Jewish culture and history (Shain, 2000, p.166). Undoubtedly, ethnic lobbying activities in a diaspora play a crucial role in consolidating the diasporic identity in the context of long-distance nationalism. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee is a strong influence on the legislative power of the USA via lobbying activities in passing many bills and resolutions in favour of Israel (Omer, 2011, p.30). The Armenian National Committee of America/Canada and the Armenian Assembly of America are also clear examples of ethnic lobbies that struggle for the Armenian Cause[3] in the diaspora, and also keep the identity alive with their mobilisation channels throughout North America. Finally, foreign investment for business purposes in home countries can be considered as a way of sustaining ethnic ties. Gillespie et al. (1999) thus argue that ethnic advantage, altruism/social responsibility for the homeland and homeland orientation are some determinants for diaspora groups' interest in homeland investment.

Tölölyan (2010, p.33) describes the first phase of diasporic nationalism as exilic nationalism which resulted from forced immigration due to cases of violence or economic reasons where a feeling of loss regarding the homeland leads diasporic people to develop a self-consciousness regarding their identities. Tölölyan (2010, p.36) argues that in exilic nationalism, the homeland is the source of strength and meaning for diaspora identity, which is threatened by "persecution or assimilation or hybridity". The author (2010, pp.36-37) contends that in "diaspora transnationalism" which describes "*the decentered and non-uniform network nationalisms*" (italics in original), there is still "a commitment to the survival and security of homeland", however, this dedication is no

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[3] Hai Tahd or Armenian Cause, even its elements can be broadened depending on circumstances based on era, consists of three political aims: "(1) Recognition that the Armenian deaths constituted genocide; (2) Reparations from Turkey; and, (3) Restitution of the eastern provinces of Turkey to Armenia" (Payaslian, 1999, p. 49, cited in Evinch, 2005, no pagination).

longer connected with a belief in the homeland as the undisputed core of national identity.

Tölölyan (2010, p.39; 2014) states that new approaches in diasporic identity emphasise the importance of *affiliation* rather than *filiation*, in other words, links, duties, and obligations towards the community that are optional, chosen and negotiated individually, and this does not mean assimilation into the host country (italics in original) (see also Vertovec, 1997, p.290). Shain (2000, p.166) also draws attention to the same understanding in the construction of the Jewish identity in the USA. There are not only homeland-related affairs in place to frame Jewish identity in the diaspora. The homeland is only one of the components which have an impact on Jewishness. The developments in American-Jewish identity and the changes to the perception of the ways one can be a member of the Jewish diaspora depends on the changes in American foreign policies in determining the boundaries of Jewish identity (Shain, 2000, p.166).

There is a striking difference between state-linked diasporas and stateless diasporas in developing collective consciousness and strategies regarding the homeland. Stateless diasporas tend to "select the strategy of irredentism or separation" by creating a political agenda for their country of origin and by making efforts "to take or be given land that once was their historical homeland and ultimately establish a sovereign state in that historical homeland" (Sheffer, 2003, p.24). The efforts of the large Kurdish communities living in many western countries towards the establishment of independent Kurdistan exemplify this type of strategy. Conversely, state-linked diasporas may prefer to establish representative organisations which take some initiative in improving relations with the homeland and their cognates in the host land or other countries and are formally recognised by the host country (Weiner 1990, cited in Sheffer, 2003, pp.24-25). At this point, the diaspora communities should not be concrete or a potential threat to the host countries' sovereignty. Western countries may tolerate activism in diaspora communities as long as these activist movements do not pose a threat to the security of the host countries (Shain, 1999). Even though there are no direct terrorist activities that are conducted by the networks of state-linked diaspora, there can be an indirect way to provide terrorist organisations, in the homeland or other places, with financial and military backing, or intelligence support.

In some cases, the countries of origin and the host countries take advantage of the activities of the diaspora. First of all, the foundations of numerous homelands as nation-states were constructed in some diasporas. According to Tölölyan (2010, p.33), the Armenian nation-state was firstly conceptualised by wealthy Armenians who lived as a trade diaspora of Madras in India between 1773-1796, using pamphlets, books and the first Armenian newspaper publishing. Likewise, Theodor Herzl, who was a member of the Jewish diaspora, was seen as a conceiver of an independent Jewish state (Safran, 2007, p.33). State-linked diasporas play a crucial role in favour of their homelands. Before the Second World War, Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy made several efforts to coordinate and mobilise their diaspora and emigrants in the USA, Latin, America, and the Middle East (Cannistraro and Gianfausto 1979, cited in Sheffer, 2003, p.159). Secondly, the participation in the elections of the home country is assumed as one of the important roles diasporas play in the domestic affairs of their homelands. Skrbiš (1999, p.7) highlights the potential influence of Croatians and Slovenians who live in Australia, as holders of dual citizenship. Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004, p.1022) similarly note the activities of political parties from the Dominican Republic in seeking political support amongst the Dominican immigrants through their organisations based in the USA.

Diasporic Turkish communities in Germany gained the right to vote at border stations in parliamentary elections in 1995, and with election law amendments in 2008, citizens can now vote in the countries where they reside. Landau (2010, p.228) argues that this change in election policy leads political parties in Turkey to campaign in the places where the majority of the Turkish diaspora lives and that this policy "brings us back to the issue of diaspora nationalism". Political visits to Germany linked to election campaigns show that political parties in Turkey consider the voting behaviours of diaspora groups. In some cases, host countries' domestic policies in favour of immigrants living in these countries may cause internal tension in the countries in question. For example, Turkey has promised citizenship status to Syrian refugees from the Syrian civil war, now resettled in Turkey (Altındağ and Kaushal, 2021, p.155). Opposition parties criticise this government policy which regards Syrian refugees as potential voters for Turkey's ruling party (Girit, 2016). Altındağ and Kaushal (2021, p.152) draw attention to the overall findings of recent research, investigating relations between the increase in

migration and political behaviour in several host European countries. This indicates that an increase in immigration leads to an anti-immigration tendency in political behaviours, even though the authors (2021, pp.169, 175) themselves did not find any significant change in the voting behaviour of the supporters of Turkey's ruling, Justice and Development Party because of the influx of Syrian immigrants. Anti-immigrant tendencies may lead the political preferences of minority groups, in the general elections in host countries, such as Germany, generally to favour left-wing parties (Grunau and Bierbach, 2017). Moreover, the possible tension with the host country and the country of origin of diaspora groups may have a strong impact on the political preferences of diaspora groups in host lands.

Finally, it should be noted that the degree of national sentiments amongst diaspora groups varies according to several factors, including generation, age, level of integration or marginalisation in the host country, and the strength of ethnic or religious ties. There have been studies conducted on immigrants' national loyalties to their home country. (see e.g. Başer, 2013; Alinia 2004). However, as Landau (2010, p.235) indicates, the lack of concrete knowledge about formal and informal connections of political networks with the political agents in the homeland, potentially, makes it difficult in the context of multiple identifications of subsequent generations to determine to what extent diaspora nationalism is strong enough to be a useful vehicle for homeland politics. Nevertheless, diasporas are not productions of the massive migration waves in the eyes of host countries and their homelands. Rather, they are each a potential political actor which should be taken into consideration in the national and global frameworks.

## 2.5   Mapping the term 'belonging' in the context of the term diaspora

According to McNabb (2015, p.241), it is crucial to "define or conceptualize" the key concepts which form the research to "impose *order* and *structure* on the data" (italics in original) before the study. The term 'belonging' is one of the key themes in my research. The concept of belonging is subject to much academic debate. The definition of belonging is extensively discussed in the extant literature, as shown by Antonsich (2010). While in the works on the state of belonging to a place or community, legal status is the

main axis of the debates on belonging, the discussions about the attachment to "gender, sexual orientation, age or (dis)ability" emerged as alternative belonging readings and they are less studied by the literature (Wood and Waite, 2011, p.201).

Yuval-Davis (2006, p.199) defines belonging at three different levels of detail. The first level indicates the social locations which consist of the components of gender, race, class or nation and are constructed in an intersectional way. They constitute each other within the context of power relations. The second level represents "individuals' identification and emotional attachment to various collectivities and groupings" (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p.199). The narratives which constitute identity play a significant role in locating the self or others in a particular place. The identity narrative is not necessarily individual; it may be collective which usually forms a base to stipulate the former (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p.202). Finally, the third analytical level is related to ethical and political values which act as an instrument which people use "to judge their own and others' belonging/s" (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p.199). At this level, the issue of drawing identity boundaries gains importance through ethical and ideological attitudes. This leads us to the realm of politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p.204). The performance of the politics of belonging underlines the criteria for the distinction of who belongs to a particular identity. It is possible to say these criteria can differ depending on the political or emotional set of belongings of the country in question.

At a first glance, the belonging in question can be explained as an emotional attachment to a place for immigrant communities. For practical reasons, newcomers to a place may have to deal with social contexts that differ from their own to develop a sense of belonging. They may also need to feel links with their homeland. This necessity is not only for the new arrivals, but subsequent generations in the community in question. However, it is key to note that "to be able to feel at home in a place is not just a personal matter, but also a social one" (Antonsich, 2010, p.649). Therefore, the matter of "socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion" and relevant discourses and practices are accompanied by a sense of belonging to a place (Antonsich, 2010, p.649). These discourses and practices form a basis for controversy as 'us and them'. The feeling of isolation also indicates the process of boundary maintenance which means "the preservation of a distinctive identity" (Brubaker, 2005, pp.5-6). As in the case of many diaspora communities, some

immigrant communities tend to build representation channels of the community in host countries over time. Political, cultural and educational organisations are some examples of these channels. In the Armenian-American diaspora community, the very first initiatives for founding diaspora organisations were in the late nineteenth century. One of the main reasons for the founding of some of these was to assist Armenian refugees who had fled from ethnic massacres or wars. Consequently, the link with their origins continued to some extent. They served as carriers of Armenian culture, values, and identity over time, laying the groundwork for the development of a 'diasporic civil society'. In the context of politics of belonging, Armenian diaspora networks are articulated as "belonging to a particular collectivity and collectivities" (Yuval-Davis et al., 2006, p.3).

Subsequent generations of an immigrant group may lose their ties with their ethnic components such as the homeland, language or culture. The command of the native language, as a crucial part of boundary maintenance, acts as a form of resistance against assimilation in the host country and to sustain belonging to a particular place in the immigrant communities' minds. However, Tölölyan (2010, p.39) argues that "affiliation" which makes room to choose and negotiate identity components regarding relevant origins, to sustain their attachments to ethnic group or homeland, gains importance over "filiation" in diasporic identity (Tölölyan, 2000, p.108). Before the re-establishment of independent Armenia, in common with stateless diasporas, the Armenian diaspora sought to achieve the foundation of a nation-state that represented them and would turn them into a state-linked diaspora (Sheffer, 2003, p.154). After the foundation of second independent Armenia, the perception of a real or symbolic homeland in the Armenian diaspora was transformed by the transformation of the stateless diaspora condition to state-linked diaspora status, following the collapse of the Soviet Union. It is worth noting that a group of Armenians in the diaspora had opposing views on Soviet Armenia (1920-1991), as I will describe in the next chapter. Therefore, contrary to Sheffer's classification, some diasporans had an idea of a state which was only "partly" concrete in Soviet Armenia (see also, Sahakyan, 2015, pp.7, 447).

In line with Sheffer (2003, pp.155-156), most members of the community pursued a "communal strategy" whereby they aim to strengthen their solidarity, to raise

memberships in diaspora organisations, and to develop the functions of those organisations in their countries of residence. This point underpins a sense of feeling at home to some degree. The subsequent generations of an internally diversified and dispersed Armenian diaspora, in the contemporary context, engage with local and host-country-specific features even though they do not represent traditional identity markers as much as their descendants (Bakalian, 1994). The networks or organisations which they form, answer the immediate purposes of the community in the place in which they live. Moreover, these political, cultural or philanthropic organisations operate transnationally between the diaspora community and the homeland and serve to raise diasporic awareness amongst the community. In other words, as Waite and Cook (2011) indicate, emotional attachment to several places at the same time is possible for subsequent generations as much as the first generation.

A sense of belonging to a community consists of both ethnic and diasporic identities in Armenian diaspora communities. As Anthias (2006) argues, people may feel they belong somewhere, but their allegiances could be "split" between places, as identities are constructed intersectionally. As already discussed, the social, symbolic and material ties within the diasporic communities determine the nature of belongings between the community and their identities (Anthias, 2006, p.25). Furthermore, in some diaspora groups, the 'home' does not connote a single place, such as the Republic of Armenia. Armenian communities which are heterogeneous cohorts consist of many Armenian people who migrated from several different countries including Middle Eastern states, Russia and Turkey, in addition to Armenia (Soviet and Independent). Even in Armenia, the official homeland of Armenian people, there were some splits in the reference points for Armenian identity in the past. For example, in Soviet Armenia, the Armenian authorities adopted a repatriation policy for Armenians living abroad. It aimed to augment the population of the homeland and to "demonstrate that Soviet republic was the one and only fatherland of all Armenians" (Panossian, 2006, p.358). In other words, the reference point concerning the belonging of the Armenian identity split into two different elements as Armenians and Soviets in the homeland. This latter mission of Soviet Armenia, in this case, represents "a shifting landscape of belonging and identity" in Anthias' words (2006, p.25).

In some cases, the sense of belonging related to a diasporic identity can be improved in "a globalised and transnational social fabric" without bounding with a nation-state (Anthias, 2006, p.25). Instead, the members of the community prefer to retain their old, or original, or local attachments in tandem with the features of the place they interact with. Conradson and Mckay (2007, p.169) highlight the importance of the self-identification of immigrants by stating that translocal immigrants have a closer attachment to their nations rather than to their nation-states. In other words, even though a person identifies themselves with their national identity, the main reference point for their concrete affiliation might be "specific people and places". The traces of this argument can be followed in the context of compatriot Armenian diaspora organisations which are specific to a city as in the case of Union of Marash (the city Kahramanmaraş in Turkey) Armenians in North America. Therefore, each member of the community may refer to a different place when they think of the "homeland".

Waite and Cook (2011) highlight the importance of the emotional attachment to a place, culture or country of origin amongst the second generation of the immigrant groups. Their articulation is not as direct as with former generations, yet there is a still feeling of belonging to a hyphenated identity and multi-place as being a part of "cultural transmission" (Waite and Cook, 2011, p.244). As in the case of the first generation of the relevant groups, the subsequent generations share a similar feeling of "plurilocal homes" with their ancestors (Waite and Cook, 2011, p.244). The feeling of belonging can be evoked for the subsequent generations by several identifiers or narratives. Moreover, a sense of belonging is not related to inclusive forms which belong specifically to the community in question but which also involve exclusive points which they leave out. For example, in the Armenian case, the historical disagreement with Turkey and Turkish society - and with Azerbaijan in the case of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict - nurtures the sense of belonging to a group. As a result of these disagreements, some Armenian political organisations emphasise Eastern Turkey and Nagorno-Karabakh as historical places of belonging in their homeland imagination, and they circulate this imagination amongst Armenian communities through various instruments such as documentaries, rallies, lobbying activities and conferences. As an example, Mount Ararat (Mount Ağrı in Turkish), in Eastern Turkey, is used as a nostalgic symbol

of the "lost homeland" and plays a role as a "marker of ethnodiasporic identity" amongst Armenian people (Tölölyan, 2000, pp.129-130).

Gilmartin (2008, p.1842) draws attention to the role of remittances which are sent by migrants to their home countries in sustaining their ties with their homelands. Hochschild and Ehrenreich (2002, cited in Gilmartin, 2008, p.1842) delineate "the reproductive roles of female migrants" by examining their involvement in the labour process in host countries as a means of financially supporting their families remaining in their homeland. In the context of the Armenian diaspora, the remittances sent by the members of migrant groups to the homeland act as community activism in favour of homeland, as well as sustaining the lives of individual families. Banaian and Roberts (2007, p.232) divide the emigrant population of Armenia into three main groups: "old diaspora", "new diaspora", and seasonal workers who have permanent homes and affiliations in the home country. Therefore, there is variety in the purposes of transferring money for these groups. For example, new diasporans, "who left during and after the Gorbachev era" and may or may not have a desire to return, are less organised compared to the financial contributions of old diasporans and associated established institutions (Banaian and Roberts, 2007, pp.232, 245). In conclusion, many Armenian immigrants are attempting to maintain economic conditions in Armenia; it is possible to say that attachment to the homeland and identity belongings continue, though at varying levels in different types of Armenian emigrant groups depending on their family connections or return projections.

To sum up, the sense of belonging of transnational communities/diasporic groups to the components of identity, although variable as a reflection of the self-identification of individuals depends on the degree of engagement in the community, on sustaining ties with the "homeland" and co-ethnics and on the relation with the host society's dominant culture, which may lead a disjuncture in representing the "identity markers" to some extent.

## 2.6   Conclusion

This chapter has presented the conceptual framework of this study, based mainly on a detailed discussion of diaspora and transnationalism. I have highlighted the main

criticisms regarding open and categorical definitions of diasporas, and the existence of alternative interpretations which make space for discussions of the hybridity of diasporic identity, which is widely observed amongst the participants in my research. Finally, I adopted an approach between the bounded and unbounded conceptualisation of the notion by following the frameworks of Brubaker (2005) and Mavroudi (2007) within the context of Tölölyan's understanding of the diasporic identities formed as *affiliation*, rather *filiation* (2010). In this regard, this study accepts that manifestations of Armenian identities are subject to "transition" from old forms to a synthesis that combines "old and new traditions", as Aghanian (2007, p.177) points out in her study on Manchester Armenians. Subsequently, I have explored relations between the concept of diaspora and transnationalism, which I traced its trail in the transnational social fields and local-diasporic fields (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004; Chaloyan, 2017). I also have attempted to show that diasporic practices are *conscious* forms of engagement with a transnational activity as a result of a sense of attachment to a particular identity. This study acknowledges that the preservation of ethnic and diasporic identity in various ways is dependent not only on emotional attachment to the identity, which fluctuates, but also on the various geographical origins of the North American Armenians, the specific conditions of the host country, and the existence of effective mobilisation channels. The degree of engagement in the discourse created by the diaspora organisations and personal stances shaped firstly by familial relations, then the multicultural environment in the host countries, are also important variations in the manifestation of the identity.

Drawing on the conceptual background presented here, I will next outline the historical origins of the Armenian diaspora and explore in more detail their current existence in the USA and Canada. Then, I will present the vehicles for mobilising the diasporans in the North American context. Finally, I will illustrate a whole picture of the elements for building Armenian diasporic identity in the context of homeland discussion.

# Chapter 3. The Armenian diaspora in North America: history and context

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter comprises three sections. The first section briefly outlines the emergence of the Armenian diaspora before its contemporary manifestation in North America. In the second section, I will present a summary of the history of the Armenian dispersion in the USA and Canada which exemplifies a dominant diaspora (Tölölyan, 2007b). Then, I will trace the historical and current existence and settlement patterns of the communities, with a particular focus on New York City and Toronto. In the third section, I will shed light on the ways that diaspora members built their political, cultural, humanitarian organisational structures; the contributions of the established diaspora organisations to ethnic retention in transnational fields; and their roles in producing Armenian identities shaped around a particular rhetoric about symbols, myths and identity imaginations. I will then discuss the notion of homeland as a focus of Armenian diasporic identity and draw attention to its contentious nature.

## 3.2 Roots of the Armenian dispersion before its presence in North America

Adalian (1989, cited in Tölölyan 2004, p.37) state that Armenians began to leave their historical lands in the late fourth century for three reasons: educational purposes in Greek cultural centres, military purposes to protect "the eastern boundary of the Persian empire and later the eastern and northern frontiers of the Byzantine Greek empire", and coerced migration to populate some Byzantine empire regions. Panossian (2006, p.57) comments that between the seventh and seventeenth centuries marked in Armenian history as "actual *survival* of the Armenian *ethnie*" (italics in original) rather than being about "the 'content' of identity" as a result of conquests of different polities. From the seventh to eleventh centuries, the history of Armenian immigration formed different types of diaspora including

in Egypt, the Black Sea and the Crimean peninsula (Tölölyan, 2004, pp.37-38). One settled in Cilicia between the Taurus Mountains and the Mediterranean Sea and later became the foundation of the Armenian "diasporan kingdom" in the twelfth century, transforming the Armenian identity with its culturally heterogeneous nature fused with other cultures in the region (Panossian, 2006, pp.63-64). After the fall of the Cilician Kingdom in 1375, some of the Armenian elite and nobles fled and settled in different countries in southern Europe whereas others remained and established major Armenian settlements in Cilicia until the early twentieth century (Panossian, 2006, p.66). Another large diaspora, according to Tölölyan (2004, pp.37-38), occurred after the eleventh century, when those fleeing Seljuk Turk invasions, in the Black Sea and the Crimean peninsula formed a new Armenian diaspora to be spread in eastern Europe.

The sixteenth century saw a new Armenian exodus. Many Armenians migrated to Cappadocia, today in central Anatolia, Turkey, the western parts of the Ottoman Empire such as Bursa, Kotahya and Smyrna (today's Izmir) and Constantinople (Istanbul) to escape the wars between the Ottoman Empire and the Safavids over Armenia and the Caucasus (Kouymjian, 1997, p.14; Tölölyan, 2004, p.39). In 1604-1605, Persia's Shah Abbas I forced Armenian residents from their original city of Julfa, in Nakhijevan in historic Armenia (today in Azerbaijan), to populate his new capital, Isfahan (Panossian, 2006, p.78; Dedeyan, 2015, p.389). This city became an important trade hub with links with Europe, India, Russia, South China and some Southeast Asia countries, and Armenian merchants formed trading colonies in these places. Part of this region was called New Julfa, which created a new diaspora in India in the seventeenth century (Panossian, 2006, pp.78-81).

In the eighteenth century, stateless Armenians who settled in various places ranging from the Indian subcontinent to Russian Empire lands, cultural centres such as Tiflis (Tbilisi), Jerusalem, and Constantinople became a "polycentric diaspora" and strengthened their culture through the "syncretic amalgamation of indigenous belief and practices" of other cultures, but they kept the emphasis on the religious and administrative importance of Etchmiadzin for creating "a unifying national culture" (Tölölyan, 2004, pp.36, 39). The efforts of the Mkhitarists, Catholic Armenian monks who settled in Venice, later in Vienna, and established ties with the Ottoman Empire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, were particularly important in the revival of Armenian national culture and literature as a

"foundation for the emergence of secular Armenian nationalism" which advanced in the nineteenth century "as the 'awakening' or the 'renaissance' (*zartonk*) of the nation" fused "with unique local identities and cultural markers" (Panossian, 2006, p.128), by unearthing "ancient roots of the Christian people of eastern Anatolia" and reprinting "the nearly inaccessible works of the early medieval Armenian historians" (Suny, 1993, p.6). This fusion, which is intrinsic to the "building blocks" (Panossian, 2006) of the Armenian identity, flourished in the diaspora and folded Armenian collective identity in a "multilocal" way. This resulted in various linguistic adaptations, political viewpoints and cultural trends based on three sources, amongst which there was and still is tension in the manifestation of national and cultural identities: Eastern (based mainly in Tiflis, shaped around Russian and German political thinking), Western (Constantinople and some western European cities, influenced by French and Italian thought) and central points (which flourished in the Ottoman Empire, evolving from "indigenous conditions") in the imagination of the national identity (Panossian, 2006, pp.129-130).

The multiplicity of the envisagement of the "*same* national movement" (italics in original) (Panossian, 2006, p.148) infused with the narratives of symbols, myths, sagas, heroes, religion and alphabet produced and established in the pre-modern era and appearing as a ""national" *mythomoteur*" (italics in original) (Dadoyan, 2002, p.80). These interpretations of national identity, which were moulded not only by socio-cultural elements of host countries but also by geographical differences amongst Armenians, were transferred to the New World through various organisational splits by the Armenian diasporas in Canada and the USA in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Before discussing these dimensions within the community in the New World, I shall first trace the journey and patterns of Armenian dispersion to Canada and the USA.

## 3.3 The historical background of Armenian immigration to the New World and the contemporary context in Canada and the USA

### 3.3.1 Armenian immigration to the USA

The existence of an Armenian community in North America dates back to the seventeenth century. The first Armenian to arrive in America was recorded by the Virginia Company of

London as "Martin the Armenian" in 1618 or 1619 (Malcom, 1919, p.51) but the exact date of his arrival in America is not known. There is another record concerning this first Armenian immigrant in the 1620s after he returned to England in 1622 with a "parcell of tobacco" he had raised in Virginia (Malcom, 1919, p.52). His name was recorded in the Court Book of the Virginia Company in 1622 due to his appeal for relief of the double duty which was imposed by custom officers in England on his "parcell of tobacco" because of his foreign birth. The records of the Virginia Company continued to refer to his name until 1624. Although the reason for his immigration to the New World and to America is not known, it can be presumed that he arrived in Virginia as a servant of the colonial governor of the British colony of Virginia, George Yeardley (Malcom, 1919, p.51; Tashjian, 1947, pp.3-4).[4]

The number of Armenian immigrants significantly increased in the late nineteenth century. Mirak (1983, pp.36-60) compartmentalises the earliest Armenian immigration to the USA into three phases. In the first phase, the immigration movement was initiated by a group of Armenian clergymen with the aim of returning to their homelands in the 1830s with the help of American Protestant missionaries in Turkey. In the 1870s and 1880s, the first groups were followed by immigrants who went to the New World from Armenian populated villages for commercial reasons or in search of job opportunities (Mirak, 1983, p.40).

According to Mirak (1983, pp.44-48), the second phase of immigration (1890-1899) was mostly shaped by immigrants who were fleeing from the Ottoman Empire for political reasons and to escape ethnic massacres. Jendian (2008, p.45) estimate that more than 12,000 Armenians fled to the USA as refugees. Mirak (1983, pp.46-47) states that the numbers of Armenian migrants fleeing from Turkey to the USA increased to about 2,500 annually in 1896 and 1897 and to 1,900 in 1898. At this point, it should be noted that up to 1898, the US Bureau of Immigration recorded new arrivals by the country of their birth, not by their ethnicity or language (Malcom, 1919, p.63). So prior to 1899, the precise number of Armenian immigrants in the country is not available.

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[4] Tashjian (1947, p.12) estimates that there were other Armenians who travelled to America, especially from European countries such as Holland and from India, where native records show that Armenians were engaged in trade activities as early as 1600.

Finally, the third phase of Armenian immigration (1900-1914) is defined as a "mass migration" by Mirak (1983, p.48). During that period, the number of Armenians who went to the USA rose steadily (Malcom, 1919, p.65; Jendian, 2008, p.45). The motivations for the Armenian migration to the USA during this period can be characterized as fear, oppression, a sense of apprehension deriving from past political massacres, and unease and economic breakdown in Turkey (Mirak, 1983, pp.49-50). In addition to these factors, Mirak (1983, p.50) describes the chain emigration of several families from Turkey, which was initiated by a young male who then encouraged the chain migration of his family members, in the fifteen years from 1899 to the beginning of the First World War. According to the records which started to classify immigrants by ethnic origin in 1899, 55,057 more Armenians arrived in the country between 1899 and June 1917 (Malcom, 1919, p.66). Gutman (2019, pp.12, 21) demonstrates that between the mid-1880s and 1915, 65,000 Armenians migrated to the USA, primarily from the Ottoman empire's Harput region. Bakalian (1994, pp.10-13) states that the pre-war immigrants to the USA mainly settled in the eastern industrial cities, such as Worcester, Boston, Providence, while others settled in New York City or mid-western cities. The members of the community carried their traditions with them as they scattered westward in the north of the USA and to the industrial heartland in Ontario. Cities in California were another destination for the Armenian immigrants. Mirak (1997, p.393) states that many Fresno Armenians who found out fertile lands and agricultural opportunities there used to be workers in eastern mills or factories before moving west to invest in vineyards, and built their ethnic enclaves.

The numbers of Armenian immigrants slowed down considerably during the First World War, except for a few who were able to enter the country with the help of their relatives in the USA (Federal Writers, 1937, p.32). Immigration then accelerated after 1921, and in the years between 1915 and 1931, 26,766 Armenian immigrants arrived in the USA according to Jendian's (2008, pp.46, 51) estimation (see also Federal Writers, 1937, p.33; Bakalian, 1994, p.10; Tashjian, 1947, p.18). Bakalian (1994, p.10) underlines that the numbers of Armenian immigrants to America were increased by "survivors from the Armenian Genocide (1915) and the deportations perpetrated by the Young Turk Government [...] until the quota system went into effect in 1924". Due to the quota imposed by the US government for each

country, the equivalent of "only 2% of the nationals enumerated by the U.S. Census of 1890" were allowed to enter the country (Jendian, 2008, p.51).

Jendian (2008, p.52; see also Tashjian, 1947, p.19) states that tracing the numbers of Armenian immigrants to the USA is difficult between 1932 and 1949 because they were registered "as natives of the countries under the quotas of which they are entering the country". After the Second World War, with the help of the Armenian National Committee to Aid Homeless Armenians (ANCHA), which was established in 1947, 25,000 Armenians were able to move to North America as displaced people and refugees from Germany, the Soviet Union, Romania, Bulgaria, Iraq and Egypt (Takooshian, 1986-87, p.142).

Tölölyan (2000, p.122) states that with the help of the Hart-Celler Immigration Act of 1965, the US quota legislation was amended, and the migration of Armenians to the USA from Middle Eastern countries increased. The main triggers of these migration waves were the civil war in Lebanon (1975) and the Islamic Revolution in Iran (1979). In this era, according to estimations, Lebanese Armenian immigrants into the USA numbered between 60,000 to 160,000, or even 200,000 (Takooshian, 1986-87, p.142). Armenian immigrants from modern-day Turkey increasingly moved to the USA to the main destinations of Los Angeles and the New York metropolitan area. Bakalian (1994, p.12) reports that approximately 10,000 Armenians moved to Los Angeles between 1960 and 1980. According to Chahinian and Bakalian (2016, p.42), the third wave of Armenian immigrants to the USA began with the migration of the Armenians from Soviet and post-Soviet Armenia mainly for economic reasons. Armenians from Armenia started to arrive in the USA in the late 1970s, and the majority of them were repatriates from Middle Eastern countries after 1947 (Douglas and Bakalian, 2009, p.41). Chahinian and Bakalian (2016, p.42) state that the Armenians coming from Armenia after 1980 are "relatively new to the US; 43% are between the ages of 18-39". According to the Census Bureau's place of birth records for the foreign-born population in the USA, Armenia-born Armenians constituted the largest proportion with a population of 78,338 (United States Census Bureau, 2015a).

After the Syrian civil war broke out in 2011, one of the Syrian Armenians' destinations was North America. They were largely resettled in Canada, which has much less stringent policies regarding the admission of refugees than the USA. Under Trump's presidency and his policy

of freezing the admission of refugees, the entrance of refugees to the USA significantly decreased and the majority of the more than 28,700 refugees in fiscal 2019, were Christian (79%) (Krogstad, 2019). These refugees were mostly resettled in the states of Texas, Washington, New York and California (Krogstad, 2019; Pew Research Center, 2019) but there are no reliable data showing how many of them were Armenians and whether they settled in New York City or Los Angeles. Today, the Armenian community in the USA (see Figure 1) consists of approximately half a million Armenians (United States Census Bureau, 2015b),[5] but, since 'Armenian' is not a choice in the list of ethnicities in the United States census, Armenian people are marked simply as 'white', so the real population with Armenian ancestry might exceed the recorded statistics (Embassy of Armenia to the United States, no date).

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[5] According to United States Census Bureau's (2015b) data, it is estimated that 468,342 Armenian people live in the USA. However, the official figures can be regarded as unreliable because the data only take the Armenians who identify themselves with their ancestry into account. For example, Tölölyan (2004, p.45) states that 800.000 Armenian live in the USA. Whereas, Pattie (2005a, p.126) expresses that the main Armenian settlements in the USA (Los Angeles area, Fresno, San Fransico) approximately has up to one million Armenians, and almost 500.000 Armenians live in the rest of the country.

**Figure 1** Map of the Armenian Diaspora in the United States and Canada (Hewsen, 2001, p.276, Map 270).

### 3.3.1.1 Armenians in New York City[6]

According to the statistical data in the American Community Survey, New York City has 11,438 Armenians who have declared they have full or partial Armenian descent (United States Census Bureau, 2015c). Needless to say, the data in the official census might not reflect the actual figure due to the lack of participation, so the precise number of Armenians in the city and over the country is not clear. Although the Armenians in New York City represent one of the oldest communities as an established diaspora group in the USA, unlike the bigger Armenian diaspora in the cities in California, the community in New York City is

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[6] A part of the study was conducted in the Greater Boston Area where hosts the centre of some of the Armenian traditional diaspora organisations, research centres and the oldest Armenian community of the USA who today live in the cities such as Watertown, Worcester, Belmont. In this subsection, the Armenian population of New York City (partly New Jersey) is focused since the study is primarily focused on this region.

much more dispersed throughout the metropolitan area (see Figure 2). Boyajian (2004), who grew up in New York in the 1930s and 1940s as part of the Armenian community, draws a picture of New York City's Armenian people when telling his family story in his autobiography *Hayots Badeevuh* ('Honour of the Armenians'). Boyajian (2004) explains that most Armenian immigrants at that time were clustered around the Holy Cross Church in upper Manhattan on 187th Street near a neighbourhood called Washington Heights. In addition to this northern part of the city, the neighbourhood of Murray Hill, located on the eastern side of mid-Manhattan in New York City, used to be another hub for the Armenian settlements (see Figure 3). Today, there is one Armenian Apostolic Church, namely St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral, and one Armenian Evangelical Church in this area. There is also another Armenian Apostolic Church located near Murray Hill which serves the community. The district used to consist of some Armenian grocery shops, restaurants and other small businesses alongside the churches.
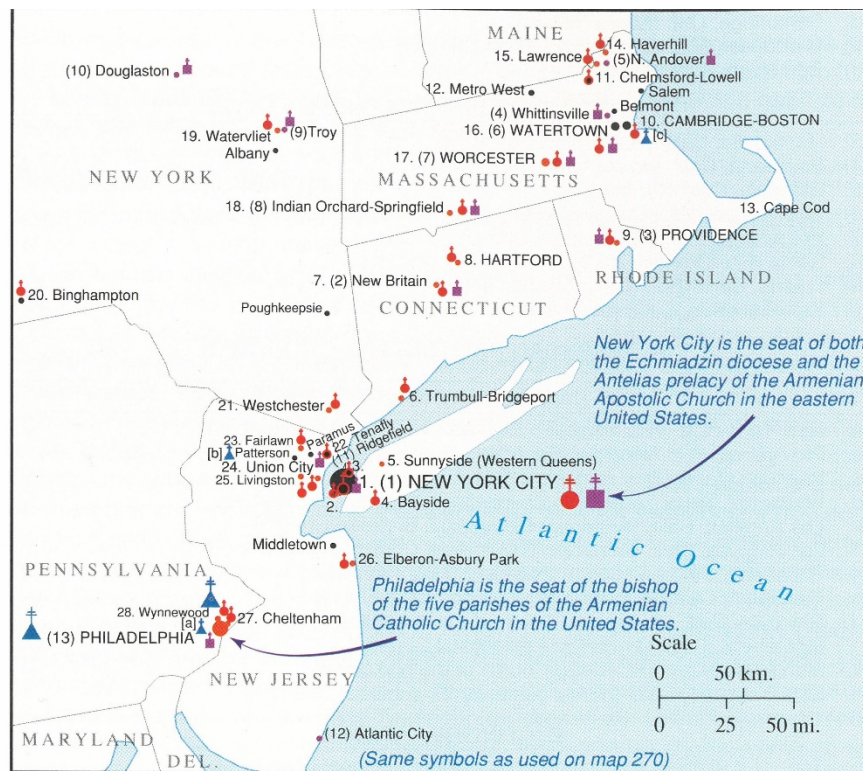


**Figure 2** Map of the Armenians in the Northeast Atlantic States (Hewsen, 2001, p.277, Map 271).
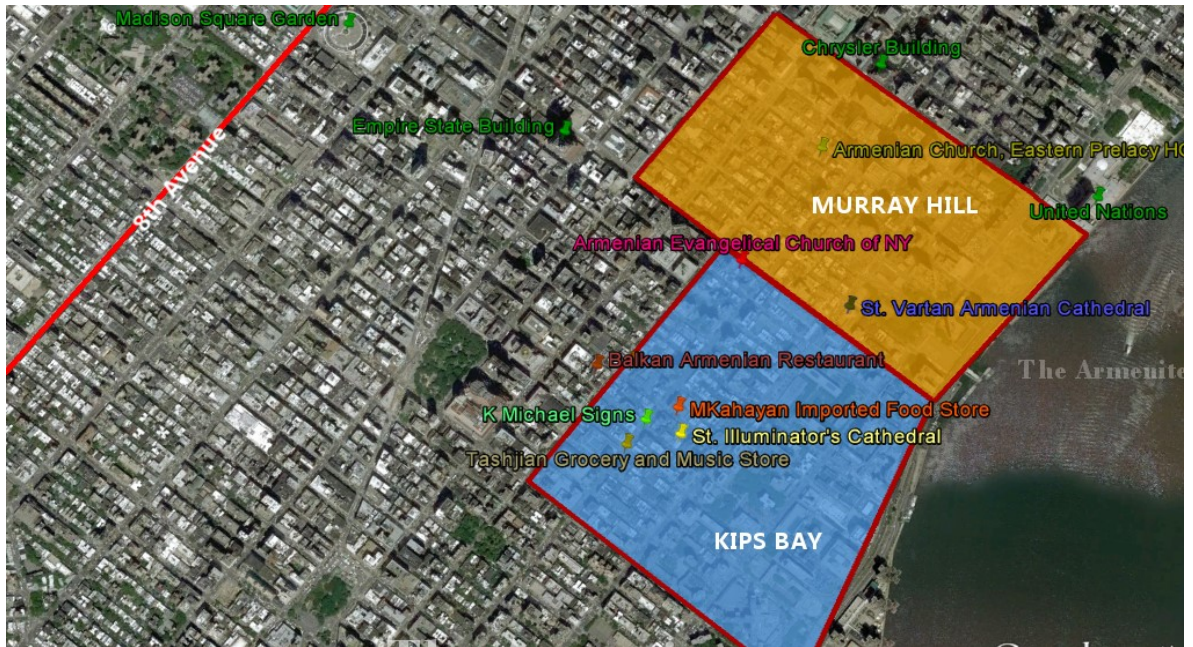
**Figure 3** Map of Murray Hill and its surroundings; the region was traditionally called Little Armenia in the last century and host three Armenian churches (Patel, 2014; Casbarian, 2020).
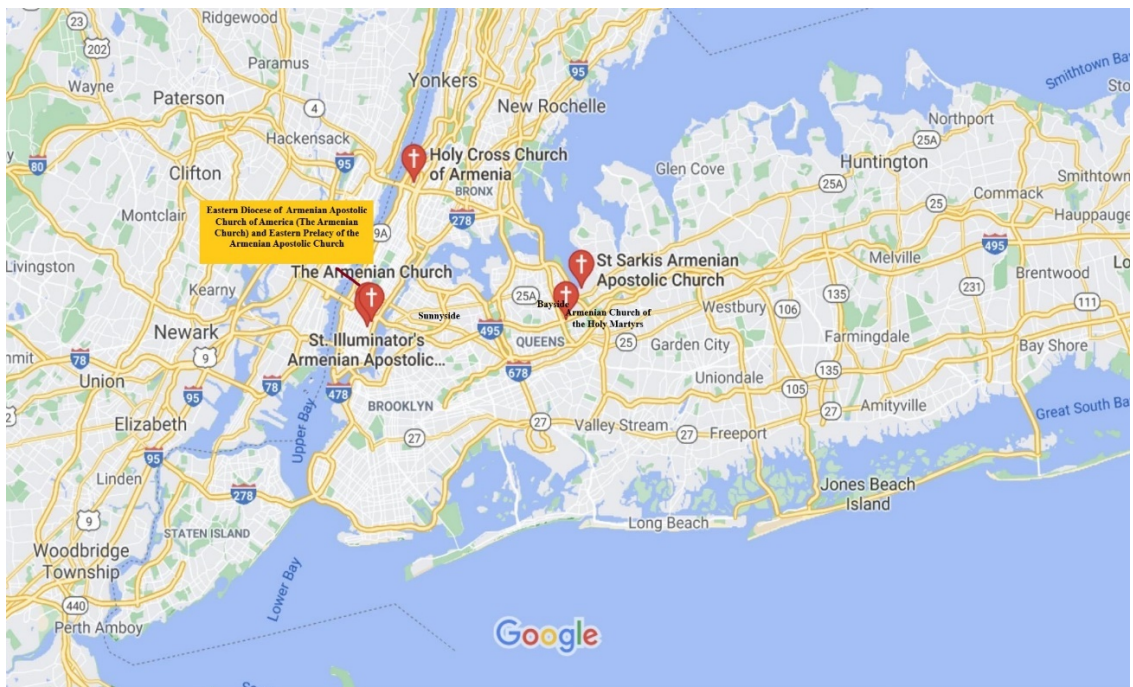


**Figure 4** The distribution of Armenian churches in New York City (Google Maps, 2021a).

At the end of the second influx of Armenian immigrants in the mid-1960s, the region became more attractive for the Armenian community with its newly founded stores such as Kahayan's and Kalustyan's which sold "imported caviar, stuffed grape leaves, bulgur wheat, dried spices like sumac berry, pomegranate syrup, nuts, dried fruit and other staples of Armenian cuisine" (Seferian, 2015, p.18; see Figure 5).



**Figure 5** Kalustyan's is one of the Armenian grocery stores remaining in the region which used to be known as 'Little Armenia': the store was established at 123 Lexington Avenue in Manhattan in 1944 by an Armenian from Turkey, Kerope Kalustyan. (photographed by the author in 2018).

After the 1970s, Murray Hill turned into a home for newly arrived Indian immigrants and Kalustyan's was handed over to a non-Armenian; the store then expanded its product range to include Indian products alongside European, Middle Eastern and Asian foods and ingredients. Thus today, some Armenians call this area "Curry Hill". By this period, the Armenians in this region had moved to other boroughs of the city depending on their economic conditions, and they also dispersed all over the New York and New Jersey provinces. The Sunnyside and Bayside areas in the borough of Queens now host a great number of Armenians and contain the two Armenian Apostolic churches and a day school affiliated with one of the Diocese churches in New York City (see Figure 4 and Figure 6). Therefore, mostly Middle Eastern, Anatolian, Russian and Caucasus-influenced bakeries,

restaurants and grocery stores in these regions became an attraction for both Armenians and non-Armenians who are interested in ethnic food.



**Figure 6** This street was renamed 'Armenia Way' in 2018. It is located next to the Armenian Church of the Holy Martyrs in Bayside, Queens. (photographed by the author in 2018).

In addition to these hubs, the northeast part of New Jersey is the home for Armenian communities coming from all over the world. Given the fact that the Armenian community has a dispersed characteristic in my research field, it should be noted that Manhattan functioned as a bridge between New York City and New Jersey for most Armenians. Many Armenian Americans living in some regions in New Jersey work in Manhattan, which is the financial hub of the city. Although several community events are organised in New Jersey, especially by the church communities, New York City hosts a greater number of events held by many Armenian ethnic associations in the city, including the Armenian churches. Also,

one of the most prominent Armenian charities, the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), whose headquarters are located in the city, and its sibling organisations host or sponsor lectures, conferences, exhibitions and numerous community events taking place for the New York and New Jersey communities in different venues across the city, some of them in the AGBU building itself. Similarly, another diasporic organisation, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation/Dashnaksuthiun (*Federation*)-affiliated organisations usually use the church halls to which they are affiliated for their events. The Armenian organisations sometimes jointly organise community events, and some events take place in various places ranging from the community centres (including churches) to specifically arranged venues.

### 3.3.2   Armenian immigration to Canada

The Armenian migration to Canada can also be divided into three waves. Kaprielian-Churchill (2005, pp.58-59) states that the first Armenian arrivals in Canada were mostly from the Ottoman Empire and less intensively from Russia (the Caucasus), starting in the late nineteenth century and continuing until the beginning of the First World War. Most were motivated by the prospect of earning money abroad and originally intended to return to their homeland as soon as they had saved enough capital. In that period, Armenian merchants, workers and small-scale farmers migrated to Canada to trade or work in Canadian factories from European ports, Anatolia and the USA and mostly settled in Ontario (Chichekian, 1977, p.66; Kaprielian-Churchill, 1990, p.87; Kaprielian-Churchill, 2005, p.59). According to Chichekian (1977, p.66), the first immigrants, who were coming from the northeastern part of the USA, preferred to settle in Ontario for three reasons: first, the demand for labour in southern Ontario; second, the proximity of this region to the north-east part of the USA; and third, familiarity with the language (English) for Armenian-American immigrants who came from the USA. Kaprielian-Churchill (2005, p.59) states that the Armenians' initial settlements in Montreal began in the 1890s and a small group remained in that city after 1918.

The second wave occurred between 1919 and 1950 (Kaprielian-Churchill, 2008). In this phase, Kaprielian-Churchill (1990, p.81; 2005, pp.155, 174-175; 2008) shows that despite the efforts of some Armenians in Canada to enable the arrival of surviving Armenians from the 1915 deportations, the strict immigrant policies of Canada meant that only approximately 1,250 Armenian people were able to enter the country between 1919 and 1930. The strict

policies of the country on passport implementation also obstructed Armenian refugees who were seeking a home to settle from entering Canada. International travel documents, namely Nansen passports, which were issued first to refugees from Russia (1922) then to the Armenian refugees (1924) were not fully adopted by the Canadian government (Kaprielian-Churchill, 2005, pp.160-161). In the 1920s, on the initiative of Canadian protestants and businessmen, the Armenian Relief Association of Canada (ARAC) was established to provide refugee camps, orphanages and health services for the dispersed survivors of the Armenian deportations and massacres, in coordination with other humanitarian initiatives or Armenian institutions such as the American Near East Relief, AGBU and the Armenian Red Cross (Kaprielian-Churchill, 1990; 2005). During this era, it was noteworthy that 109 Armenian boys between the ages of eight and twelve, known as the Georgetown Boys,[7] were transported by the ARAC between 1923 and 1927 to a farm/home/school near Georgetown, Ontario, where they worked on the farm, made a home and were educated until the age of sixteen (Kaprielian-Churchill, 2005, pp.200-201). These Armenian orphans would therefore become adjusted to the Canadian environment and grow up as Canadian citizens.

Chichekian (1977, pp.66-68) points out that immigration regulations in Canada were far more restricted in the 1930s and that this continued until 1952 when parliamentary approval was given to an immigration law that ended the categorisation of Armenians as members of the *Asiatic Race* (italics in original). This classification had prevented Armenian immigration to Canada (Kaprielian-Churchill, 2005, p.375). This change was achieved through the efforts of the Canadian Armenian Congress, which was established in 1948 by "taking the lead from ANCHA" (Chichekian, 1977, p.68; Kapreilian-Churchill, 2005, 374). By 1930, approximately 3,100 Armenians, mostly refugees and orphans from Turkey, Greece and other Middle Eastern countries, were on Canadian soil (Chichekian, 1977, p.66). Armenian immigration to the country during the years the 1930s to 1950s was virtually non-existent (Chichekian, 1977, p.67; Privy Council, 1970).

Kaprielian-Churchill (2005, p.373) calls the Armenian immigration to the country in the period between 1950 and 1988 the third wave. At the beginning of this period, sponsorship

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[7] For further details on the Georgetown Boys, see Apramian, J. 2009. *The Georgetown Boys*. Toronto: Zoryan Institute.

with some quotas which were allowed by the Canadian immigration authorities played a significant role in admitting Armenian immigrants. The non-discriminatory, humanitarian and labour market-based changes in Canada's immigration policies throughout the 1960s and 1970s, which focused on the 'quality of migration' such as education level, command of the language, skills and adaptability to the host country, rather than ethnicity, paved the way for an increase in Armenian immigration to Canada (Kaprielian-Churchill, 2005, pp.383-385). According to Chichekian (1977, pp.69-70), most of the Armenian cohorts going to Canada between 1946 and 1966 were from Syria and Egypt, with 2,864 immigrants, followed by immigrants from Turkey, Greece and Lebanon; they mostly settled in Quebec and Ontario. Quebec gained popularity for Armenian settlers after 1953, except for 1955, mostly because of the humanitarian efforts of Kerop Bedoukian and Yervant Padermajian in Montreal within the Canadian Armenian Congress to bring Armenians from countries such as Turkey and Greece and provide them with initial job opportunities (Kaprielian-Churchill, 2005, pp.369, 402-403). Kaprielian-Churchill (2005, p.402) also underlines that the French language was a key factor for this preference of most Armenian immigrants who were able to communicate in French. As in the case of the USA, Armenians fleeing the civil war in Lebanon moved to Canada in the 1970s and 1980s. Yeretsian (2020, p.69) states that there was a small phase of Armenian immigration from Soviet Armenia in the late 1970s. Between 1980 and 1990, almost 8,000 Armenian immigrants entered the country (Kaprielian-Churchill, 2005, p.399). The Armenian community in Canada was revitalised by immigration from the new Republic of Armenia in the 1990s and 2000s (Yeretsian, 2020, p.69).

Finally, a wave of migration from Syria and Lebanon to Canada occurred after the civil war in Syria in 2011. The Government of Canada received more than 26,000 Syrian refugees between 2011 and 2016, and the majority of them entered the country between December 2015 and February 2016 (Houle, 2019). According to the data, 44,620 refugees had been received in the country by 31 October 2020 (Government of Canada, 2021a). Yeretsian (2020, p.69) points out that almost 3,000 Armenians from Iraq and Syria were settled in Montreal after 2009. To resettle Syrian Armenians, Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAH) offices made significant efforts within the scope of religious, ethnic, community and humanitarian organisations (Government of Canada, 2021b; Halajian, 2015). By 2017, Toronto had received a significant amount of Armenian refugees. It can be thought that the

reason for this preference might be related to the job opportunities in Toronto for newcomers, especially for the Syrian refugees in the Armenian community, with the help of community organisations.[8] Canada's 2016 census recorded the Armenian population in the country as 63,810 (Statistics Canada, 2021a). Although there is no concrete number for the size of the population, according to the Government of Armenia's Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs (no date.a), 90,000 Armenians live in Canada today. The most preferred regions for settling are the metropolitan areas of Toronto (21,710) and Montreal (26,100) (Statistics Canada, 2021b; 2021c; also see Figure 7).
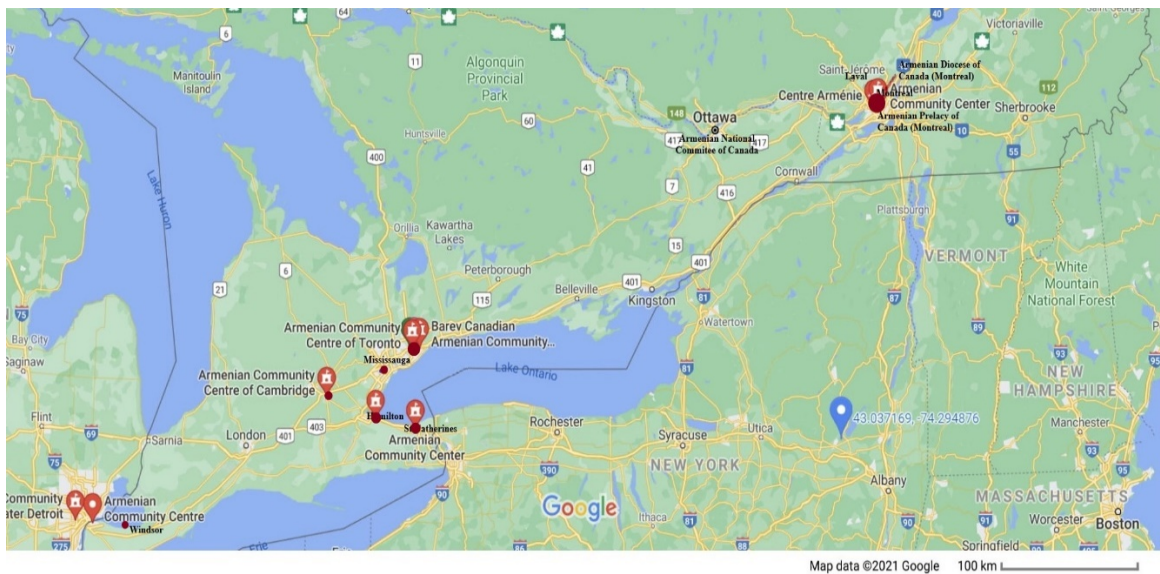


**Figure 7** Map of the most populous Armenian settlements in Canada (Google Maps, 2021b).

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[8] According to one of the Armenian activists who participated actively in the process of transferring and resettling Syrian Armenians, Toronto has become increasingly popular with Armenian refugees from Middle Eastern countries in the last two years, owing to the Quebec government's suspension of private sponsorship for refugees in 2017, particularly because of the free language classes for those who do not speak French, which was one of the attractions to settle in Montreal, in addition to the presence of a large Armenian community. Therefore, in the new circumstances, Toronto gained importance for newcomers who wanted to have a job and earn money, which is supported by the community centres.

### 3.3.2.1 Armenians in Toronto

Data show that totals for the Armenian population vary based on the administrative structures of the Greater Toronto Area. This current study is based on the city of Toronto and includes the wards of East York, North York, Scarborough, Etobicoke, York and the city itself where I conducted the fieldwork. In the 2016 census, the Armenian population living within the borders of the city of Toronto was recorded as 12,265 (Statistics Canada, 2021d).

Toronto Armenians mostly live in the Scarborough and North York areas of Toronto (see Figure 8). These districts host many Armenian restaurants, bakeries, groceries, supermarkets, religious institutions, community centres and a healthcare centre. There is also an Armenian day school in this area. Many Armenians commute to work within twenty kilometres eastward and fifteen kilometres southward of Scarborough. However, this region's Armenian population has largely been replaced by Chinese communities over time and today the area is shared mainly by these two communities. Additionally, there are particular pockets of Armenian communities in Markham located in the Greater Toronto Area of Southern Ontario in the northeastern area of the city of Toronto. The Armenians living in these two regions interact with each other and with the other Armenian groups living in downtown Toronto, and they participate in the activities organised in both places. Hamilton, St Catherines and Cambridge also have numerous Armenian communities. But as the city of Toronto is thriving, the young people in these cities prefer to move to Toronto for several reasons, such as education or job opportunities.

There are five Armenian churches in the area, including Markham. Two of them are Apostolic churches, one affiliated with the Holy See of Cilicia and the other is under the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin. There are also two Armenian Protestant churches and one Armenian Catholic church. In addition to the Armenian day school, the Armenian Apostolic Church affiliated with the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin has an Armenian Saturday School which gives Armenian education including literature, history, culture and music from Kindergarten to Grade 8. Toronto Armenians are relatively newer than the Armenians in New York/New Jersey, so the community in Toronto is more vivid, less assimilated, more community-engaged and particularly interested in community events and activities.
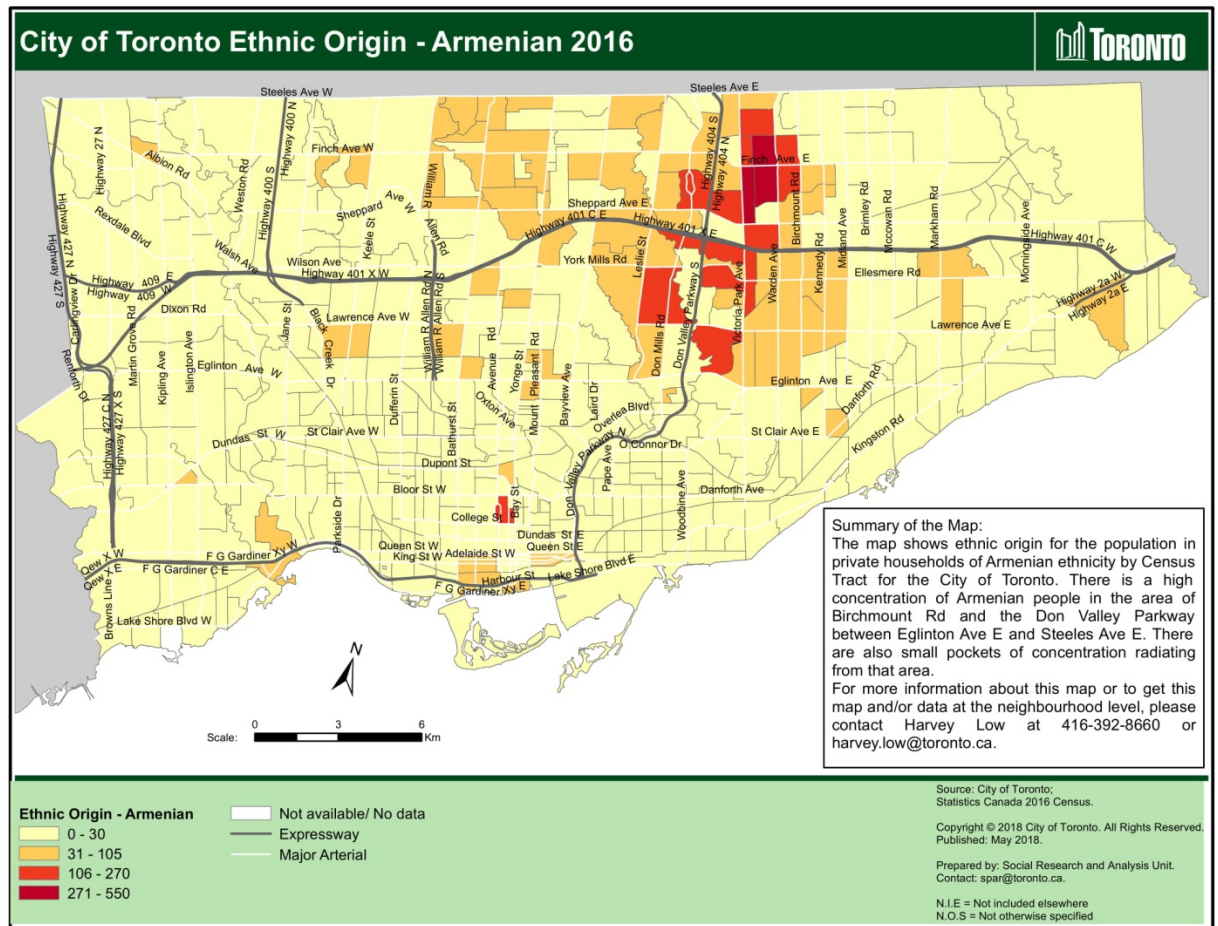
**Figure 8** Map of Armenian settlements in the city of Toronto (City of Toronto, 2018).

In particular, in Toronto, the Armenian Community Center, which is also one of the most significant Armenian organisations in Montreal, has an important role in gathering the Armenian community together. The campus, where the Center is located, hosts many Armenian sub-organisations and a day school affiliated with the Dashnaksuthiun which will be detailed in the next section. The Apostolic Armenian Church which is affiliated with the Holy See of Cilicia is situated in the same area.

From the late nineteenth century, Armenians have constructed their ethnic enclaves and developed tools to maintain their identity and to perform Armenian nationalism abroad. Their relations with Armenia have also transformed their ways of manifesting Armenian nationalism and influenced the internal dynamics of the diaspora itself. Amidst the survival

and transmission of the ethnic identity, the collective memory regarding the 1915 deportations and massacre of the Armenians which shapes the Armenian diasporic nationalism plays a significant role. In the next section, I will briefly outline how Armenians created their mechanisms in the USA and Canada for the survival of their ethnic identity. I will also discuss their relationship with the Soviet and independent Armenia, which underpins their long-distance nationalism.

## 3.4 An overview of the Armenian diasporic identity

In this section, I will briefly outline the ways in which the North American Armenians have rebuilt their collective identity within the context of the respective host-country conditions. I will then present a broader discussion concerning the complexities of the homeland phenomenon in the construction of the diasporic identity.

### 3.4.1 The rebuilding of Armenianness abroad

Five principal components sustain the Armenian identity: religion, literacy and language, national narratives and political activism, territorial attachment, and customs or traditions. These core elements act as a basis on which to construct, draw and sustain the lines of a collective structure – an ethnic group, community or nation. As Armenians have dispersed widely over the centuries, religious and political institutions are the main carriers of the collective cultural identity on a formal level, even though there are several possible interpretations and rankings of the importance of the various components of the collective identity, which change according to the subjective articulations or internal dynamics of each group. Armenian identity is mobilised and transmitted to subsequent generations through the ethnic organisations which produce and sustain myths and symbols. The exploration of the role of these 'shared' and 'contested symbols' in the articulation of Armenian identities was a focus of earlier research in particular of the Armenian communities living in the USA (Atamian, 1955; Phillips, 1989). These studies showed how some stereotypes and labelling deriving from political associations influenced relations within the community and the wider Armenian identity. The Armenian Apostolic Church, as the national church of Armenians anywhere, is therefore of particular significance. Bakalian (1994, p.89), however, observes that "where there was a church, there was also politics", indicating the link between the two

central elements of Armenian community life. The politics, which were shaped around the church and relations with the homeland, created particular diasporic organisations which had and today still have specific agendas for mobilising Armenian communities in the diaspora.

Panossian (1998, p.151; Tölölyan, 2000, p.109) states that the construction of a diasporic entity is very similar to the building of national identity in terms of drawing on the efforts of intellectuals and organisations. In the North American context, the embryonic feature of the communities started with the settlement of the bulk of Armenian arrivals in the mid and late nineteenth century who settled and created their ethnic enclaves in these areas (Mirak, 1983; 1997; Bakalian, 1994; Kaprielian-Churchill, 2005). Similarly, Armenian immigrants in Canada used to live in a 'clannish' way because of their need to be in solidarity with each other in the New World. So when they first immigrated to the country, they clustered in the same area which was close to their workplaces, and this was where the origins of the Armenian quarter began (Kaprielian-Churchill, 2005, pp.325-327). For the very early arrivals, the New World was a temporary workplace to which they came to earn and save money to send to their families in the old country, and they hoped eventually to return to their homes. These hopes largely faded out, however, with new arrivals forced out by various political developments in their ancestral land.[9]

*Churches*

Tölölyan (1987a, p.94) contends that the role of religion in the formation of collective Armenian identity was vital from the fifth to the nineteenth centuries, but the prevalence of nationalism as a modern ideology meant that the religious influence on identity was replaced by an Armenian national unity. Even so, martyrdom and fighting on behalf of the nation were and still are frequent themes used by the ecclesiastical structures. Tölölyan (1987a, p.91)

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[9] Mirak (1983, p.250) states that the nationalist political organisations which were mobilised in the USA regarded the host country as "a way station, a temporary exile, a brief resting place for the pilgrims until they return to the fatherland". Similarly, Kaprielian-Churchill (2005, p.108) writes that the nationalist newspapers of the community in the USA encouraged the Armenian immigrants who were "'walking in the streets' with 'no work, no money'" to return to their homeland. There were also some organisations, such as the *Asbarez* newspaper published in California, which considered the USA as the place where the Armenian cohorts would be rooted (Mirak, 1983, p.250).

explains that in the ancient and medieval Armenian kingdoms, the elites were "intermediaries between the Armenian population and its foreign overlords [; they …] constantly competed for the acquiescence of population and for legitimacy". Thus "elites must claim to be warriors for the nation [...] or guardians of the immortal souls of Armenian individuals and the equally transcendent soul or spirit of the Nation". As Tölölyan (1987a, p.91) points out, since the founding of the Armenian Church, "the 'warrior' claim has come to imply martyrdom" and these two terms have begun to be used interchangeably, and this connotation has the power to demand strong support from the diaspora. This connotation can be found in nineteenth-century Armenian revolutionary fighters' struggle and in the Armenian terrorism in the early twentieth century against high-ranking Ottoman bureaucrats who were responsible for the deportations and killings of Armenians in Baku in 1918, or in the 1970s and 1980s against Turkish diplomats. Tölölyan (1987a, p.92; 1987b, p.229) states that the Armenian terrorism did not have "pro- or anti-ecclesiastical" engagements nor did it bring their awareness to the forefront to use religious traditions, however, they used the discourse of "martyrdom" or "sacrification" in their motivations.

In terms of the institutional life of the Armenian diaspora, in addition to the political, cultural, charitable and "intellectual and politically active elite" organisations, the national church has played a significant role in creating a national consciousness and transnational bonds with the other Armenian communities and with the homeland (Pattie, 2005a, p.131). During the initial period of adjustment of the Armenian immigrants in the areas where they had just settled, they began to cluster around the churches (Bakalian, 1994, p.89). Armenian churches consist of Armenian Apostolic, Catholic and Protestant. Armenians in the USA were mostly affiliated with the Apostolic Churches whereas the Armenian Catholic Church[10] had the smallest proportion of the Armenian community (Bakalian, 1994, p.102). Armenian Protestants, the majority of whom were Congregationalist, often adjusted to the dominant culture of the USA because of their historical proximity to American Congregationalism,

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[10] Phillips (1989, p.102) states that the Armenian Catholic Church has maintained much of the Armenian Apostolic Church's canons and tradition, even though "they 'united' with the Roman Catholic Church".

having educated clergy and being far away from the political schism which affected the Apostolic Church (Mirak, 1983, p.195).

The Protestant Armenians began to conduct church services in 1881 in Worcester (Mirak, 1983, p.197; Bakalian, 1994, p.92). In the physical absence of Apostolic churches, the Apostolic Armenians searched for alternative solutions to adhere to their spiritual rituals. Following the establishment of the first Apostolic Church in Worcester in 1891, church communities emerged in Boston, Providence, New York, Lawrence and Fresno (Papazian, 2000, p.327; Mirak, 1983, p.183). With the growing numbers of Armenians in the USA, in 1898, Catholicos Mgrdich Khrimian, who was Catholicos of All Armenians in Etchmiadzin, founded the Armenian Church of America (Armenian diocese) by an encyclical (Mirak, 1983, p.186; Papazian, 2000, p.327). In Canada, the first Armenian Apostolic church was built in St Catherines in 1930 by the earnest efforts of the Armenian community there. Before that, Kaprielian-Churchill (2005, p.276) states that church services for the community were held in the local Anglican churches.

The Apostolic churches in the diaspora are divided into two Catholicosates: the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin in Armenia and the Catholicosate of Cilicia, which is located in Antelias, Lebanon. This history of the division between the Catholicosates can be dated back to the pre-modern era,[11] but in the North American diaspora, the church division derived from a political split in the mid-1930s. That bifurcation, which emerged as pro-Soviet and anti-Soviet camps amongst the Armenian immigrants, was sharpened by the assassination of the Archbishop of New York appointed by Etchmiadzin, Ghevond Tourian, in New York City in 1933. At an Armenian Day event arranged during a fair in Chicago on 1 July 1933, the guest speaker Archbishop ordered the removal of the tricoloured red, blue and orange flag which had been placed by the supporters of a nationalist and socialist political party, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (the ARF/Dashnaks), and was known as the emblem of the short-lived Republic of Armenia between 1918 and 1920 when the Dashnaks held power

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[11] The Catholicosate of Cilicia was located in Sis, Cilicia, which is the current location of Turkey's district of Kozan in Adana. It was re-established in Antelias, Lebanon, in 1930 with the cession of Cilicia to Turkey in 1921 (Sahakyan, 2015, p.134).

and was assumed as the symbol of 'free Armenia' by the ARF[12] (Kaprielian-Churchill, 2005, p.280; Walker, 1980, p.354). Archbishop Tourian was denounced and regarded as a traitor by the anti-Soviet Dashnaks due to his support for the Soviets before his assignment to the USA. Indeed, there was a belief amongst Dashnak sympathisers that the Armenian clergymen appointed by Soviet Armenia to North America were tools for Soviet political aims (Kaprielian-Churchill, 2005, p.281; Panossian, 2006, p.354; Alexander, 2007, p.32). The archbishop was assassinated on Christmas Eve 1933 at the Holy Cross Armenian Apostolic Church in New York City (Alexander, 2007).[13] Dekmajian (1997, p.415) considers that the ideological split between the Armenian political parties in the early twentieth century affected community relations in the diaspora to the extent that "families, cultural societies, educational institutions, and ultimately the Armenian Church" were all divided. The Apostolic church was split into two factions as Diocese and Prelacy. Diocese churches continued to follow the Mother See in Etchmiadzin. Dashnak sympathisers, who followed Prelacy, organised around St Illumunitor's Armenian Apostolic Cathedral Church of New York (Kaprielian, 2005, pp.281-282). The Prelacy of the Armenian Church in North America had officially affiliated with the Catholicosate of Cilicia in 1958 (Phillips, 1989, p.153). Today, the divisions between the churches depending on political affiliations continue, yet the conflict between interpretations of Armenian identity, which were shaped by political associations, is not so fierce as it was in the past.

*Political activism*

The Armenian national awareness, which arose from deteriorating socio-economic conditions and a lack of legal protection for Armenian rights, grew amongst the Armenians in the New World in sympathy with their brethren in the Ottoman Empire and Russia. Armenian political movements in the diaspora can be traced back to the late nineteenth and

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[12] Kaprielian-Churchill (2005, p.280) states that this flag was not welcomed by the Armenians who were in the sect of the conservative/left and they associated the flag with the Dashnaks as a symbol of the party.

[13] Even though some Dashnak sympathisers were committed to prison, the party robustly denied the accusations attributed to their role (Kaprielian-Churchill, 2005, p.282). The general opinion of the community members I spoke to, especially the first-generations, was that some Dashnaks deepened this cleavage with the assassination.

early twentieth centuries. As well as organising marches and speeches, Armenian immigrants in the USA repeatedly petitioned Congress during the mid-1890s as part of their efforts to raise awareness of the repression of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire by both politicians and the public. American initiatives led to action to help the refugees with their relief associations, mainly steered by Henry Morgenthau, the American ambassador to the Ottoman Empire. In mid-1915, an American-Armenian Relief Fund raised money to transfer the survivors beyond Ottoman jurisdiction (Payaslian, 2005, p.89). The mobilisation of Armenians in North America resulted in community institutionalisation. In the first half of the 1890s, revolutionary parties, including their internal factional groups, established branches and presses in New England and New York, holding meetings, fundraising activities, and even military training of Armenians to support revolutionaries in the old country (Mirak, 1983, pp.207-210, 226, 241).[14] Similarly, in Canada, these political parties mobilised in cities such as Brantford, Hamilton, St Catherines and Galt (Kaprielian-Churchill, 2005, p.95). For example, Kaprielian-Churchill (2005, pp.505-506) stated that the first branch of the ARF was officially established in Brantford in 1904 and that of another Armenian political party, the Hunchakian Party (Hunchaks), was in St Catherines.

Armenian political activism based on their organisations was transnational from the start (Tölölyan, 1996a, pp.32-33n21). The first socialist, Marxist and nationalist Armenian party, the Hunchakian Revolutionary Party, was founded in 1887 by Russian Armenian students in Geneva with the aim of liberating Armenians exposed to political, economic and social pressures exerted by alien overlords and officials, and establishing "an independent and unified Armenian Republic" in the Armenian-dominated areas, not only within the Ottoman Empire but also on the borders of Russia and Persia. The party pursued these aims through propaganda, terrorist acts and agitation methods (Nalbandian, 1975, pp.104-115). The party's name changed twice, in 1905 and 1909, to the Hunchakian Democrat Party and then the Social Democrat Hunchakian Party; the latter remains the party's official name today (Panossian, 2006, p.203).

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[14] Mirak (1983, p.329) notes that an Armenian political party, Hunchakian Revolutionary Party (Hunchaks) organised their first annual national convention in the USA in 1894 with the attendance of numerous delegates from different cities mainly in New England.

In the same period as the establishment of the Hunchaks, another revolutionary Armenian party was organised in the summer of 1890, in Tbilisi in Russian Transcaucasia. The Armenian Revolutionary Federation (the ARF or Hai Heghapokhakanneri Dashnaksuthiun), also known as the Dashnaktsuthiun ('Federation') was established by the fusion of numerous Armenian organisations, mainly in Russia (Nalbandian, 1975, p.151). The ARF's main aim was the liberation of Armenians living in Turkish territories (as the Hunchaks targeted), and they were less committed to socialism, although a faction did adopt socialist objectives. Even though their party programme of 1892 included some socialist principles, their purpose was to gain "political and economic freedom" and "national liberation" by many tactics, including violence, targeting the Ottoman government rather than "peaceful Moslem Turks" (Panossian, 2006, p.206-207; see also Nalbandian, 1975, pp.166-67, 171). Moreover, unlike the Hunchaks, they chiefly sought reform in 'Turkish Armenia' rather than political autonomy (Nalbandian, 1975, pp.169-170; see also Ter Minassian, 1984, p.12). Panossian (2006, p.209) states that the ARF gained success as it reflected various ideological persuasions from "nationalist or socialist, moderates or radicals", and it aimed to appeal across the socio-economic spectrum, from peasants to the middle class. This stance enabled them to increase their supporters (see Ter Minassian, 1984, p.11).

Finally, the liberal wing of the Armenekan movement[15] was engaged in the newly established "bourgeois-liberal Sahmanadrakan Ramkavar Kusaktsutiun (Constitutional Democratic Party)", which was founded in Alexandra in Egypt in 1908 and renamed Ramkavar Azatakan Kusaktsutiun (Democratic Liberal Party) in 1921 in Istanbul (Panossian, 2006, pp.202-203). Papazian (2000, p.325) stated that this party represented the conservative middle-class parts of the community, and the general tendency of the organisation was to avoid radical activism and violence and rather to promote political and individual rights along with free-market economic and private property approaches (Nalbandian, 1975, p.107; Panossian, 2006, p.203).

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[15] Armenekan, which was established in 1885 under the leadership of a student of the exiled Mekertitch Portugalian in Van, in the Ottoman Empire, is accepted as the first Armenian revolutionary political party in the nineteenth century (Nalbandian, 1975, p.96). The moderate Armenekan Movement was subsequently superseded by more revolutionary political organisations which absorbed some of its members.

Armenian revolutionary parties created a new understanding of the Armenian identity which was shaped by secular, modern notions which were imbued with the views of the lower and middle classes. They thus represented a sense of identity endorsed by the "young intellectuals, fedayees,[16] party workers/members and affiliates" rather than by the clergy and the upper class. Moreover, as Panossian (2006, pp.212-213) notes, these revolutionary parties stood for "individual and collective rights based on European principles of freedom".

The Dashnaks, after having been exiled to the diaspora, following the collapse of their rule over a short-lived independent Armenia (1918-1920) – quickly claimed as part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics – were the most influential organisation to mobilise diasporic communities by keeping alive the ideal of a "united, free and Independent Armenia" amongst Armenians abroad (Panossian, 2006, pp.250-253). Atamian (1955, pp.250-261) argues that Dashnaks shaped the Armenian identity by creating a "hero-cult of nationality" which urged national solidarity amongst the group by legitimatising their role as "champions, defenders, and protectors of the Armenian nation". The Dashnaks with their institutional structures were the most distinctive example of a government-in-exile, which nurtured the "hope of eventually returning to power in Armenia in the existence of a homeland which was under the Soviet authorities" (Tölölyan, 1990, pp.139-140). The Ramgavars and Hunchaks, other exiled elites, adopted a more tolerant approach towards Soviet Armenia and recognised their foreign authority "as necessary for protection and aid" (Pattie, 2005a, p.128). Pattie (2004, p.111) states that the Dashnaks' approach began to be more tolerant in the 1970s and that they embraced "the idea that Armenia needed protection" even under the authority of Soviet Russia.

These organisations' political activism expanded to represent the Armenian communities at the national level with the help of lobbying activities. Shain (1994-1995, p.811) states that many diasporas in the USA take advantage of the tolerance and openness of the US political representation of ethnic groups and its liberal-democratic tradition, which also paved the way

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[16] This word, which can be translated as 'freedom fighters' to liberate the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, is associated with the Armenian revolutionary movement in the Armenian folk memory (Ter Minassian, 1984, p.19). Ter Minassian (1984, p.19) says that the origin of the word is Persian and that it means that "he who is committed" or "he who is sacrificed".

for the political and transnational activism of the Armenians to influence the host state in making public policy. According to Tölölyan (2007b, pp.107-108), the most noticeable political activities of the Armenian diaspora includes lobbying to influence the government of the host country to produce policies on behalf of their homelands or kin-states. These activities are supported by the establishment of relationships with supranational organisations such as the United Nations and transnational non-governmental bodies for the development of their homelands. First, the Washington DC-based Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) in the 1940s evolved from the American Committee for the Independence of Armenia (ACIA), founded in 1918 to lobby on behalf of the ARF-governed first Republic of Armenia (Gregg, 2002, p.10). The ANCA's activism is to lobby local and federal governments to gain support for political, economic, security, military or humanitarian issues which related to the Armenian-American community, to genocide recognition, to Armenia's claim on Nagorno-Karabakh, and to any other Armenian community interest, such as the recent Armenian Syrian refugees. Moreover, the ANCA also supports the community in Javakhk, Georgia[17], and raises awareness about it amongst young Armenians in the USA by working in collaboration with the ARF organisations, such as the Armenian Youth Federation's 'Camp Javakhk'.

Its Canadian counterpart, the Ottawa-based Armenian National Committee of Canada (ANCC) established in 1965 organises activities mainly in Ontario and Montreal through its central, regional and local offices. In addition to campaigning on the same issues as the ANCA, the ANCC shares the same goal, which is "to foster public awareness in support of a free, united and independent Armenia" (ANCC, no date).[18] The ANCC works as an advocacy group, influencing policy-makers on issues relating to the Armenian-Canadian community; it also seeks to deepen relations between Armenia and Canada.

In response, in 1972, with the aim of bringing all Armenian-Americans from every sect together by setting aside the political differences amongst them and creating a forum where

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[17] Tölölyan (2014) considers the Armenians of Georgia, which constitute the majority in the region, as a *territorialised* diaspora (italics in original).

[18] This aspiration included the reparations and territorial demands from Turkey (Sahakyan, 2015, p.272).

Armenian-Americans could speak with one voice and on matters on which they agreed, the Armenian Assembly of America ('the Assembly') was founded (Paul, 2000, pp.30-31). This organisation has an office in Glendale, California and another in Yerevan. The Assembly does not work by chapter, in contrast with the ANCA, which is widely organised throughout the USA through its local chapters which interact with sibling organisations of the ARF in their own regions. The main point of the Assembly is that it is an advocacy organisation, which emphasises its non-partisan attitude in its Armenian policy approach. The ANCA is also an advocacy organisation, but it emphasises the strength of its grassroots, giving it a 'bottom-up' structure (Gregg, 2002, p.20). In contrast to the ANCA, the Assembly is not a lobbying arm of a political party. Its affiliate organisations are the Armenian National Institute, which is dedicated to genocide research, and the Armenian Tree Project, which is a reforestation project in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.

Today, both organisations advocate an independent, economically strong, democratic and prosperous Armenia and "the right to self-determination" of Nagorno-Karabakh, and they work to develop relations between the USA and Armenia/Nagorno-Karabakh. They differ in legal structure, lobbying approaches and methods.[19]

*Cultural and philanthropic mobilisation*

The "'diaspora-style' nation-building" which Panossian (2006, p.292) juxtaposes with the "'Soviet-style' nation-building" which took place in Soviet Armenia, emerged in the Armenian communities in the 1920s and 1930s and strived to reinforce their identity against the threat of assimilation. Pattie (2005a, p.128) states that the difference in the policy between the political organisations towards the homeland formed a ground for competition in mobilising the diasporic communities, churches and schools. They created their own cultural, sports/athletic, youth and humanitarian organisations. This factionalism has had two principal results. First, as Kaprielian-Churchill (2005, p.457) comments, the duplication of ethnic activities in schools, organisations and churches created a very fruitful and vivid

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[19] Although the ANCA is a 501(c)(4) organisation, the Assembly operates under 501(c)(3) status. Zarifian (2014, p.507) explains this difference by stating that 501(c)(4) status identifies a non-profit organisation, which can conduct lobbying activities, whereas 501(c)(3) organisations are "theoretically" not permitted to conduct lobbying as their main activity.

"ethnocultural environment". On the other hand, the factionalism was felt to be unpleasant by members of the younger generation and led them to move away from the community (Kaprielian-Churchill, 2005, p.457).

Today, Armenians, in addition to ethnic newspapers, publications and cultural, athletic and youth organisations founded by the political parties, churches and some non-partisan structures, mobilise mostly through charities in their daily lives. These provide Armenians all over the world, including Armenia, Karabakh and the heavily Armenian city of Javakheti (in Armenian *Javakhk*) with educational, cultural and humanitarian services through a series of projects organised by their branches in several countries in the diaspora. Some of these bodies have been active since the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the USA and Canada. These organisations are too numerous to be detailed in this study. Table 1 shows the traditional organisations and their sub-groups, with which some of the participants in the current study interacted:

**Table 1** Principal Armenian organisations in the USA and Canada

| ORGANIS ATION | ARF ANCA/ANCC | Hunchak | Ramgavar | The Assembly (lobby) | AGBU (Humanitarian, established in 1906 in Cairo)[20] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Charity | Armenian Relief Society (ARS) (1910 in the USA) | – | – | | |
| Youth | Armenian Youth Federation (AYF), ARF Junior Organisations/ *Badenegan* | *Gaidz* Youth Organisation (CA) | – | – | Young Professionals |
| Cultural | *Hamazkayin* | *Nor Serount* Cultural Union | *Tekeyan* | – | Ensembles and groups in music, art, theatre and dance |
| Sports and Athletic | *Homenetmen* | *Homenmen* | – | – | Chapter teams in various sport branches/ AGBU scouts (CA) |
| Newspapers /Publication s | *Hairenik/ Armenian Weekly*, *Asbarez* | *Massis Weekly* (western region of the USA), *Loussapatz* (*Nor Serount* Toronto) | *Baikar*, *The Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, *Nor Or* | *Armenia 360* (news and information about Armenian issues in the world)[21] | AGBU News Magazine. *The Insider* |
| Research/H umanitarian | | | | Armenia Tree Project, Armenian Genocide Museum of America, Armenian National Institute (research org.) | Armenian Virtual College (AVC), AGBU Nubar Library (Paris) |

In addition to these organisations, there are Armenian research centres that are organised independently but are partly funded by some of the organisations shown in Table 1. For example, the Armenian Legal Center for Justice and Human Rights (ALC) was established in Washington DC in 2016 by a significant grant from the ANCA Endowment Fund (Anon., 2016). The research centres are significant structures that make a considerable contribution

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[20] The organisation is based on non-partisan foundations. Bakalian (1994, p.186) shows that members' political affiliations vary from Ramgavars to *chezok* (non-partisan). Also, Talai (1989, p.31) notes that the organisation "is sometimes identified with the Ramgavar Party".

[21] The organisation emphasises that this platform does not reflect the perspectives of the Assembly and its affiliated bodies (Armenia 360, 2021).

of scholarly works to Armenian studies. The most visible ones are the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR, 1955), the Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center (1987) of the Armenian Diocese of America, the Zoryan Institute (Toronto), which was founded in Cambridge (MA) and Toronto in the first half of the 1980s, and an academic initiative, the Society for Armenian Studies (1974), which conducts significant scholarly works in Armenian studies. A relatively new establishment, the Sara Corning Center for Genocide Education (Toronto, 2012) was established to provide teaching about humanitarian rights and genocide-related studies for elementary and secondary school students.

Compatriotic organisations which were first founded in particular cities, where the immigrants had settled, to ameliorate the educational and social conditions in their hometowns, created and developed solidarity amongst the fellow citizens. They thus became useful channels through which to gain information and news from their homelands. Over time, however, they have come to appeal to older members of the community, rather than to the young (Bakalian, 1994, pp.184-185; see also Mirak, 1983, pp.173-75, Kaprielian-Churchill, 2005, pp.436-439). Today in North America, the Constantinople Armenian Relief Society (New York City), the Organisation of Istanbul Armenians (Los Angeles), the Union of Marash Armenians (Toronto and Montreal) and the Bolsahay[22] Cultural Association (Toronto, 1988) are some of which remain active. Armenians are also organised by alumni organisations, such as *Esayan*, *Getronogan* and the *Mkhitarian* Catholic school of Istanbul alumni.

These diaspora organisations are still active and important vehicles for transferring the Armenian identity to the next generation even though they appeal more to the mobilised segment of the community. Their missions lean more towards Armenia with its independence, and they function as ethnic carriers to create awareness and responsibility on behalf of their homelands even though its essence is complex for many Armenians.

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[22] Armenians who are from/of Turkey in particular Istanbul are called *Bolsahay*, which is the shortened Armenian translation of the appellation of Armenians who are from Constantinople.

### 3.4.2 The homeland complexities and the diasporic identity

The most significant reference point for a diasporic identity is the homeland phenomenon. Kasbarian (2015a, p.359) points out that the concept of 'homeland' in the classical approach in the diaspora discussions emphasises the centrality of the place of origin from which the diasporans are "considered to be tragically exiled". In the case of the Armenian diaspora, the homeland is a contentious issue, especially for four to five million Western Armenians living in North America, European countries and Middle Eastern countries whose origins are in Anatolian lands that are currently from part of the state of Turkey (Pattie, 1997, pp.6-7; Panossian, 1998, p.149; Kasbarian, 2015a, pp.359-360). Considering that for a long time "the Armenian world has been based on interconnected communities without an umbrella government of their own" (Pattie, 2005b, p.53), the complexities regarding a sense of attachment to a particular homeland become more meaningful.[23]

The homeland has been ideologically constructed not only through the discourse of elites and institutions but also through the sense of attachment of individuals to a particular land. Pattie (1997, p.32) states that there are "at least three parallel constructions of Armenian homeland": the first refers to the Republic of Armenia which is the homeland for its residents and most diasporans. The second homeland refers to historic Armenia which has 2,500 years of past within the territories encapsulating Dikranagerd (Diyarbakir within the borders of Turkey today) to Karabakh, which builds "group cohesion" in Armenians in a mystical way (Kasbarian, 2015a, pp.359-360). The third reference point of the homeland is the local attachments of the people, representing their towns and villages from which they or their families originate.

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[23] In this sense, Tuncel (2014) analysed "the construction of the Armenian ethno-national social reality" through the discourses of the Armenian state and new-generation diaspora organisations based in the USA, as well as blogs and travelogues in which young diaspora Armenians shared their experiences, observations, and feelings about their visits to the homeland through these organisations. Chaloyan (2017, pp.20-21, 30) examined transnational practices of the Armenians living in Germany by looking at two different categorical groups as Hayastantsis who came from Armenia to Germany and Western Armenians (*arevmtahay* in this context) who do not have a direct link with Armenia.

After the long-term Soviet experience of the country, the western diaspora felt an estrangement from the country. The division strengthened the splits between Eastern Armenia (the Persian and Russian Empires) and Western Armenia (the Ottoman Empire) which existed before the Soviet annexation of Armenia (Kasbarian, 2015a, pp.360-361). Bakalian (1994, p.341) states that during the twentieth century, Armenians' attachment to their "spiritual homeland" was separated between the Soviet Union and the Republic of Turkey. Bakalian (1994, pp.341-342) mentions a few symbolic diasporic trips to "ancestral lands", and journeys made to Soviet Armenia by Armenian-Americans mainly after the Cold War had 'thawed'. From the 1920s, Soviet Armenia was claimed to be the "fatherland of Armenians" in calls for repatriation by the Soviet authorities. Panossian (2006, pp.358-360) states that the repatriation (*nerkaght[24]*) of the diaspora to Soviet Armenia continued until the 1970s. The most striking repatriation move was initiated by the Soviet government in 1945 to populate "the historic Armenian regions of Kars and Artahan to be acquired from Turkey"; plans which "came to naught" in the post-war era. Panossian (2006, p.360) states that 100,000 Armenians, who were primarily Western Armenians, were 'repatriated' between 1946 and 1948 mostly from Syria and Lebanon. But those whose country of origin was located within the Anatolian lands felt cultural alienation and fear related to the socio-economic conditions prevalent in Soviet Armenia. Most returnees had a strong emotional and patriotic attachment to Soviet Armenia or found sufficiently attractive affordable conditions in the country to enable them to move to Soviet Armenia and to settle there (Pattie, 1997, pp.110-111; see also Pattie, 2004). However, Pattie (1997, pp.110-111; Kasbarian, 2015a, p.363) describes the disillusionment of the returnees when they faced the homeland realities and found themselves discriminated against by being called *Akhpar/Aghpar* (which means 'brother' but is used in a derogatory way to denote newcomers).[25]

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[24] The term represents the resettlement process of the Armenians living outside Soviet Armenia in the country under Soviet policies. Pattie (1997, p.110) calls it a "gathering-in".

[25] Panossian (2006, p.362) states that the use of this word in Soviet Armenia indicated "a new identity cleavage" between the locals and the Armenians from abroad after the repatriation process in the mid-1940s, and the author adds that this split is still felt in Armenia, even though in a slight way.

Laycock (2012, pp.105-106), in her study focusing on Armenians returning to Soviet Armenia in the years between 1946 and 1949, states that "images of homeland and narratives of homecoming are not 'timeless'; rather they are reshaped through particular social and political contexts". Safran (2005b, p.48), similarly argues that relations or ruptures between diasporic groups and their homeland "are contextual and episodic", by referring to particular occasions which evoke interest in the homeland in several ways. However, while an historical lens can be valuable in helping to explain trends in identification with the homeland sense in a specific era, diasporic behaviour on behalf of the homeland arguably displays many continuities, rather than being frozen in a particular time. As Susan Pattie (2005b, p.65) has pointed out, independent Armenia has influenced the "dynamics of the diaspora" and states that its existence motivates diasporans to reflect on their identities, especially in the context of "diasporic transnationalism in which considerations of subjectivity and personal identity play a major role" (Tölölyan, 2010, p.28).

In the context of the multilayered, complex nature of the homeland, Panossian (1998, p.151) argues that the feeling of attachment of the diasporic identity embedded in the diasporic consciousness created a "connectedness" to the homeland, "however defined" and "a sense of unity as one nation" amongst different diaspora groups despite all their internal diversities. That is to say, Panossian (1998, pp.151-152) believes that the focus of the diasporic identity shifted from a particular homeland to space of "a diasporic transnational entity" in which the national identity is vivid, but does not unquestionably contain "the idea of return". In the Armenian context, Tölölyan (2010, p.36) therefore regards "the Armenian transnation" as including the Republic of Armenia, the *de facto* state of Karabakh, and "variously territorialized, sedentary and mobile" Armenian diaspora members.

In the early years of the independence of Armenia (1991-1992), the homeland-Armenia relationship was the focus of a "short-lived honeymoon" (Panossian, 2005, p.232). Following Armenia's declaration of independence in 1991, three members of the Armenian diaspora in the USA were assigned to important official positions in the new state. Surveys conducted by Minoian and Freinkman (2006) show that the diaspora Armenians' interest in the homeland increased after the success of the independence movement, as their image of the homeland became concrete. Yet, despite the efforts of the Armenian diaspora to help to counter the socio-economic deterioration of the country, Armenia confronted the biggest

emigration movement from the country in the previous seventy years of its history (Gevorgyan, 2009, p.51).

The diaspora-homeland interaction on the state level was further solidified by a series of Armenia-Diaspora conferences which started in 1999 (Pattie, 2005b, pp.50-51) and continued in 2002, 2006, 2011, 2014 and 2017. Kasbarian (2015a, p.366) regards these attempts to use state policies to attract investments in the country as a "category of symbolic gestures". For example, Kocharian's government was to pass dual citizenship legislation in 2007 that had previously been rejected by the Ter-Petrossian government in 1995. Kasbarian (2015a, pp.366-367) states that the number of diasporans holding Armenian citizenship is hard to assess, but drew attention to the Special Residency Status (SRS) which was initiated in 2006 and is still more prevalent amongst the diaspora Armenians. It enables people to enter the country without having to obtain a visa, guarantees the right to work without special permission and provides an exemption from military service. Kasbarian (2015a, p.367) explains that SRS was given on a renewable, ten-year basis to people of Armenian origin or those who were "distinguished individuals" carrying out "cultural and economic activities" in the homeland.

The Ministry of Diaspora was established in 2008 but was then abolished under President Nikol Pashinyan "as part of a government 'optimisation' drive" (Avetisyan, 2019) and its responsibilities were transferred to the Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs under the prime ministry, and this was regarded as a more solid step to bridge between the diaspora and Armenia. Cavoukian (2016, pp.5, 12-13) argues that the founding of the Ministry was a discursive attempt to "redefine the category of diaspora" to encompass "post-Soviet Armenians abroad", who were not previously considered within the Armenian diaspora, "and frame state-diaspora relations in ways that benefitted the state". Cavoukian (2016, p.12) regards this initiative as "identity gerrymandering" on behalf of state interests. Cavoukian (2016, pp.8, 13-16, 22) challenges the assumptions and applications of the Ministry, which assign a capacious diasporic identity to the Armenians living beyond the borders of the country without making any distinction between the characteristics of these communities. She also criticises its "discursive power" which attempts to redirect the diaspora-homeland relationship in line with state interests and to produce policies to

determine the activities of the diaspora organisations, which are seen "legitimate" by the state.

Darieva (2017, p.426) comments that the Ministry sponsored programmes based on a philosophy of "one nation – one culture" for diasporan children and teenagers. For example, the *Ari Tun* ('Come Home') programme could be regarded as an example of the Ministry's top-down approach in regarding the diasporans as "an extension of the nation that the Republic of Armenia represents as an internationally recognized political body" (Darieva, 2018, p.83). As previously mentioned, however, the question of where 'home' is disputable for many Western Armenians.

## 3.5  Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explained the historical origins of Armenian immigration to the world and more specifically to the North American countries in different phases. I have shown the distribution of the community in particular in the research sites of the study. In this way, I have presented their main settlements and the semi-ethnic enclaves which are linked to other locales in these countries.

I have also illustrated the main ethnic means which create and sustain boundaries around a particular community abroad against the threat of assimilation. The boundaries are still preserved by the diaspora organisations, even though the political divisions solidified by different political engagements have mostly lost their significance amongst the east coast Armenians residents. Bakalian (1994, p.164) states that all these political parties were irrelevant to later-generation American-Armenians and argued that the only reason for their existence was the post-Second World War immigration. Even though they are insignificant for most native-born ethnics, they did create a specific way of manifesting the Armenian identity in line with their priorities and ideological background, and these are still performed and transferred to the next generations by the mobilised sections of the community. Their agendas were updated by the 1988 Spitak earthquake, the Karabakh conflict at the end of the 1980s and the Independence of Armenia and generated more projects and programmes conducted in Armenia with the help of mobilised Armenians in the diaspora. In addition, new-generation transnational diaspora organisations emerged in the 2000s to strengthen ties

between the diaspora and the homeland, and I will discuss this in greater detail in Chapters 6 and 7.

In the final part of this chapter, I discussed the complexities of attachment to Armenia. Today, most members of the western diaspora find their place attachments in their local, particularistic links, such as their families, town or villages left behind in their countries of origin (Pattie, 2005b, p.51). It should be noted that for those who were born and raised in the host countries, the distinction between 'home' and 'homeland' can be blurred, and home might represent the country of residence even though they are embedded in the Armenian milieu. So the affective belongings of those who describe their status as "a diaspora of a diaspora", as Aprahamian (1999, no page; 2007, p.70) found amongst the Montreal Armenians, is manifested in various ways, mostly "fragmented" but still part of the same collective. As aforementioned, the main argument of Bakalian's book, *From Being to Feeling Armenian* (1994) is that Armenian-Americans assimilate into the host culture in subsequent generations and lose their traditional identity markers. Tölölyan (1996b, p.24), following Bakalian's (1994) argument that in each generation Armenians in the USA 'feel' more Armenian, but 'be' less Armenian, comments that Armenian-Americans occasionally behave as Armenians in some way and context, but "feel Armenian some way". In the latter manifestation of Armenianness which was named "symbolic" by Bakalian (1994), the evolution of shared symbols and their rejuvenation through experiences in different ways might demolish the distinction between 'being' and 'feeling' specifically for the diasporan Armenians whose identities are defined as hyphenated and fragmented around several belongings. In the following chapters, this point will be extensively addressed in the context of community members' articulations of their Armenian identities.

# Chapter 4. Methodology and methods

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an outline of the qualitative method used in the current study which I conducted largely in New York City in the five boroughs of Manhattan, Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens and Staten Island, for eleven months between October 2018 and April 2019; and in the City of Toronto between June and November 2019. In this chapter, I will describe and justify the research design, research methods and research process applied in the study. I will also discuss the ethical considerations embedded in the research and my positionality as a researcher while carrying out the study.

## 4.2 Research design

The current study focuses on a two-site case study, adopting a replication logic and conducting similar cases in different contexts (Yin, 2018). This enables exploration of the construction of the individual and collective identities of the Armenian communities in different settings in relation to a wider diasporic consciousness. My study centres on what was said by the participants, how the experience was recounted and the discourses used by the participants depending on the social, cultural and political contexts in which they were embedded. The inquiry about being Armenian in different settings enabled me to acquire in-depth knowledge about the particular phenomena which were constructed by the individuals, and this design enabled me to analyse "how individual cases might be affected by different environments, and the specific conditions under which a finding might occur" (Chmiliar, 2010, p.582). Moreover, this approach revealed the similarities and differences in particular cases representing sub-groups within each case.

This study employed a qualitative research method in which semi-structured interviews and participant observations were used for data collection. In this respect, the data reflect a deeper insight into the respondents' views about the "fabric and situated activity" (Layder, 1993, p.16) taking place in the research sample. According to Layder (1993, p.116), "as attention

is concentrated more on the consequences of particular social experiences for the selves and identities of individuals", the researcher will attain deeper insight into "a specific person's recollections, perceptions and feeling about their social experiences over extended periods of time". With this in mind, I adopted an interpretative approach to reveal "why people do what they do by uncovering the largely tacit, mutual knowledge, the symbolic meanings motives and rules, which provide the orientations for their actions" (Blaikie, 2000, p.115). The wide range of detailed information from the interviewees also helped me to interpret how a participant was able to "frame and understand issues and events" (Bryman, 2012, p.471).

In this study, this approach was deemed to be the best tool for understanding Armenians' experiences of being an Armenian in the diaspora and their articulations and manifestations regarding their identity, which is shaped and varied in line with their cultural, social and political attachments. This approach also helped me to interpret how their sense of belonging to the community and homeland was shaped by highlighting their ways of diasporic engagement.

I largely conducted my US fieldwork in New York City between October 2018 and April 2019, but I also visited Watertown and Belmont in the Greater Boston Area, where some of the mainstream non-governmental diaspora organisations are located and also where some of the oldest Armenian communities in the USA are to be found. I also conducted a couple of interviews with members of the community who lived in New Jersey, but who mostly spent their lives in New York City for educational or occupational purposes. After having completed the fieldwork in New York City, I moved to Toronto to continue my research. I conducted the second part of the fieldwork in the City of Toronto between June and November 2019.

## 4.3   Research methods

### 4.3.1   Semi-structured interview

I adopted an in-depth, semi-structured interview method for collecting my primary data. The reason for the choice of an in-depth interview is that it is a useful tool that enables the researcher to acquire detailed empirical knowledge from the interviewees and also makes space for the deeper interpretation of the various meanings embedded in the responses which

reflect different perspectives of the respondents. The flexibility in the direction of the interview for the researcher and in the way of replying to questions for the participants which is provided by a semi-structured interview has been recommended in many previous studies (for example, Bryman, 2012; Bernard, 2011).

I started the interviews by asking the interviewees several questions concerning their age, education, the date of their migration to the host country and their migration stories as some of the characteristics are given in Tables 2 and 3. Following these questions, I asked them to talk about their identities and their lives as members of an ethnic community in their place of settlement, then I continued by asking about their perspectives on and performances in the political and cultural sides of the identity, their homeland and their relations with their ethnic cognates in the community.

My open-ended interview questions were divided into two categories. The first category explored the insights of the Armenian respondents around a specific inquiry into topics that mainly focus on three parts with several themes in a broad sense. The first part involves questions about the self-representations of participants as Armenian living in the North American countries and their interpretation of founding components of their self-descriptions. The second part focuses on being an Armenian in a multilayered, diverse Armenian community in the host countries. The questions in this part explore participants' articulations of intra-community relations, schisms and ways of being/ways of belonging within the diverse community. This part also tackles the channels and ways that the interviewees use to manifest their identities. To this end, the questions for this part aim to understand their viewpoints about the traditional diaspora organisations, their imagination of identities shaped by these structures or developed outside of them, and the participants' motivations for being engaged in community affairs through particular channels. The third part consists of questions about the homeland phenomenon. In this part, the first question was asked to gain an understanding of where the participants see as their homeland, by concentrating on their understanding, sense of belonging, and attachments to the homeland. I asked my interviewees about their ways of exhibiting attachment to the homeland. This part also includes some questions about their attachments to Nagorno-Karabakh and its place in their identity articulations/manifestation. The Armenians in this segment were community members who were actively or occasionally involved in community affairs and transnational

attachments. I do not make a distinction between those two groups of people because active participation in community affairs – including transnational activities – on a regular basis is itself characterised by "ebb and flow", as Levitt and Glick-Schiller (2004, p.1012) describe.

The second category of questions was used to interview leading Armenian figures, local representatives and board members of cultural, humanitarian political organisations, politicians, executive directors of research centres, school principals, clergy members of various denominations, scholars and intellectuals. These questions were designed to elicit a general profile of the community in their country-specific conditions and to determine how they carried out their missions of bridging the gap between community members' self-identity and collective identity.

The second category of questions focused on community leaders' observations and perspectives on the socio-cultural and demographic characteristics of the communities, the degree of participation in community affairs or programmes provided by organisations, and new approaches to Armenianness amongst the communities in light of the existence of an independent homeland and developments in the homeland. Moreover, the purpose of some of the questions was to understand the roles of the organisations as mediators between the communities and the homeland. In some interviews, I sought answers to the question about the kind of initiatives they took to influence their socio-economic and political picture of the homeland. The community members' interview responses demonstrate how Armenian identities are built in a web of complex and multifaceted relationships. Meanwhile, those who take active roles in the organisations are informative about the Armenian communities in Canada and the USA at both the local and national levels. The latter thus complemented the information which I gained from the interviews with the first group.

Although I followed the questions listed in the question schedule, reflection on my main research questions led to some modification of the specific questions asked, depending on the tone of the interview and the particular interests and expertise of the interviewees. Moreover, I diversified and expanded the content of some of the questions to reflect local circumstances and recent political developments in the homeland. As an example, before I started my fieldwork, Armenia had undergone significant changes in its political structure. The anti-government protests, the so-called Velvet Revolution, which took place between

April and May in 2018, ended with the election of Nikol Pashinyan as the new Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia. The Velvet Revolution in Armenia brought new blood to Armenia's political class and encouraged Armenians who wanted change in the country. Moreover, my observations suggested that the Revolution and the Pashinyan government had instilled hope and excitement amongst diasporic members. I therefore also asked some questions about their point of view on Armenia's current politics.

These questions were asked to show that the Armenian diaspora is not a monolithic, homogenous structure, but that it has multiple senses and interpretations of individual and collective identity. The primary goal of the questions is to better understand the variations, complexities, and differences in perceptions of Armenian diasporic identity and its components in an environment that allows multiple belongings of the participants to manifest simultaneously and in different ways. The interview questions also examine the centrality of the homeland in the participants' Armenian identities in light of the conceptual framework of Chapter 2. Part of the questions, therefore, aimed to comprehend how an independent Armenia has impacted the diasporic identity of the community members.

I conducted seventy-three interviews with participants in the USA and Canada who varied in their demographic features. Those who were first-generation immigrants had at least five years of living experience in their respective host countries. I conducted forty-three face-to-face, in-depth interviews with members of the community in New York City and the Greater Boston Area and thirty interviews in Toronto. There were twenty-six male and seventeen female participants in the sample in the USA and twenty male and ten female interviewees in the sample in Canada. The total number of female interlocutors in the unofficial conversations was much more than the total number in the official conversations in both research sites. These unofficial interviews with women are part of my field notes. I conducted numerous unofficial interviews with women involved in events, activities, churches, bazaars and the community centres, which are hubs of the community. I, therefore, believe that the substantial overall number of female participants enabled me to gain an insight into the general perceptions of Armenian women in the community. Nonetheless, my observations showed that the numbers of male and female members of the community in various activities change depending on the event. In general, Armenian women were very welcoming when

communicating with me, but they were also more hesitant about deciding whether they wanted to be interviewed by me officially.

**Table 2** The list of participants interviewed in NYC and the Greater Boston Area

| Pseudonym | Generation | Gender | Place of Birth | Sending Country | Affiliation/Participant of the activities of Organisation/Institution | Education | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Torkom | 1st | Male | Georgia | Georgia | Church (Diocese & Prelacy) | High School | 35 |
| Jirair | 1st | Male | Israel | Israel | AGBU/ Church (Diocese)/ Armenian Media | PhD | 68 |
| Vahe | 1,5th | Male | Armenia | Armenia | Church (Diocese) | BA | 31 |
| Artun | 1st | Male | Iran | Iran | Church (Evangelical) | MA | 57 |
| Firouz | 1st | Male | Iran | Germany | Dashnak/ARF-related organisations/institutions | BA | 71 |
| Mihran | 1st | Male | Turkey | France | Church (Diocese)/ Church Choir | BA | 60 |
| Norayr | 1st | Male | Turkey | Turkey | Church (Diocese) | High School | 68 |
| Toros | 1st | Male | Turkey | Turkey | Multiple/ Knights of Vartan | BA | 70 |
| Garo | 1st | Male | Syria | Lebanon | Armenian Dance Schools/ ARF-related organisations/institutions | BA | 62 |
| Nishan | 1st | Male | Lebanon | Lebanon | Dashnak/ARF-related organisations/institutions | Religious School | 48 |
| Dikran | 1st | Male | Egypt (Greater Boston Area)[26] | Egypt | Dashnak/ARF-related organisations/institutions | BA | 90 |
| Ara | 2nd | Male | USA | Turkey | Multiple/ The Armenian Engineers and Scientists of America (AESA) | MS | 30 |
| Arman | 2nd | Male | USA | Turkey | ACYOA/AESA/AGBU/COAF | BA | 28 |
| Hagop | 1.75th | Male | Armenia | Armenia | COAF/AGBU | MA | 30 |
| Krikor | 3rd | Male | USA | Syria (one of the parents) | Church (Evangelical) | BA | 34 |
| Misak | 2nd | Male | USA | Armenia→Syria→Italy (both parents) | AGBU | BFA | 31 |
| Sarkis | 2nd | Male | USA | Turkey | AGBU/ Dashnak/ ARF-related organisations/institutions/ Churhes (Diocese & Prelacy) | BA | 27 |
| Hrant | 2nd | Male | USA | Lebanon and Syria | Church (Evangelical)/AGBU | DMin | 32 |
| Bedros | 2nd | Male | USA (Greater Boston Area) | Turkey | Armenian Media/ Tekeyan | BA | 59 |
| Aris | 3rd | Male | USA (Greater Boston Area) | Turkey (Ottoman Empire) | Dashnak/ ARF-related organisations/institutions | BA | 54 |
| Ghevont | 3rd | Male | USA (Greater Boston Area) | Turkey (Ottoman Empire) | Armenian Assembly of America | J.D/BA | 54 |
| Narek | 4th | Male | USA | Turkey | Church (Evangelical)/AGBU | BA | 28 |
| David | 4th | Male | USA | Turkey (Ottoman Empire) | AGBU/COAF/ Church (Evangelical) | BA | 28 |

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[26] Greater Boston Area shows the place of interview.

| Nazaret | 4th | Male | USA (Greater Boston Area) | Turkey (Ottoman Empire) | Armenian Research Institutes | PhD | 50 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Martin | 4th | Male | USA | Turkey (Ottoman Empire) | Armenian Research Institutes | PhD | 33 |
| Adam | 4th | Male | USA | Turkey and Syria→Paris | Church (Evangelical)/ AGBU | PhD | 33 |
| Vartuhi | 1,5th | Female | Syria/ (Greater Boston Area) | Syria | Armenian International Women's Association/AGBU | BA | 58 |
| Alin | 1st | Female | Iran | Armenia | SOAR/COAF/AGBU | M.D. | 35 |
| Siroun | 1st | Female | Georgia | Armenia→Russia | Church (Diocese)/ AGBU | MS | 59 |
| Narod | 1st | Female | Bulgaria | Bulgaria | AGBU/Church (Diocese) | MA | 42 |
| Ani | 1,25th | Female | Azerbaijan | Russia→Armenia→Canada | Church (Evangelical) | MA | 31 |
| Mariam | 1,5th | Female | Lebanon (Greater Boston Area) | Lebanon | Dashnak/ARF-related organisations/institutions | MS | 26 |
| Hranush | 2nd | Female | USA (Greater Boston Area) | Lebanon | Multiple/Dashnak/ARF-related organisations/institutions | MS | 40 |
| Lena | 2nd | Female | USA | Turkey and Lebanon (parents) | Multiple/AGBU/ Dashnak/ARF-related organisations/institutions/ Churches (Diocese and Prelacy) | BA | 28 |
| Talin | 1,75th | Female | Turkey | Turkey | AGBU | MS | 30 |
| Anna | 2nd | Female | USA | Armenia (before Lebanon)→Georgia and Egypt (parents) | Multiple/ ACYOA/AGBU/COAF | MS | 27 |
| Lara | 2nd | Female | USA | Iran→Lebanon and Lebanon (parents) | Church (Evangelical) | BA | 36 |
| Louisin | 2nd | Female | USA | Iran | Multiple/ASA/AGBU/ AESA/ ARF-related organisations/institutions | MS | 31 |
| Zepour | 2nd | Female | USA | Syria | Dashnak/ARF-related organisations/institutions | BA | 26 |
| Seda | 2nd | Female | USA | Iraq and Lebanon→ Armenia (parents) | Dashnak/ARF-related organisations/institutions | BA | 28 |
| Nazeni | 2nd | Female | USA | Lebanon-Germany and Turkey/ Germany (parents) | Dashnak/ARF-related organisations/institutions | BA | 18 |
| Lerna | 4th | Female | USA | Turkey (one of the parents in early 1970s)/ Ottoman Empire (one of the parents) | AGBU | MA | 26 |
| Mary | 3rd | Female | USA | Turkey (one of the parents came to the USA in the mid-1920s) | Church (Diocese) | MPhil. | 67 |

**Table 3** The list of participants interviewed in Toronto

| Pseudonym | Generation | Gender | Place of Birth | Sending Country | Affiliation/Participant of the activities of Organisation/Institution | Education | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kevork | 1st | Male | Iran | Germany | AGBU/ARF-related organisations/Armenian Association of Toronto (AAT) | BA | 60 |
| Zaven | 1st | Male | Iran | Armenia | AAT/AGBU/ARF-related organisations/institutions | BA | 60 |
| Markar | 1st | Male | Turkey | Turkey | AGBU/ Bolsahay Cultural Association | BA | 62 |
| Khachig | 1st | Male | Turkey | Turkey | AGBU/ Church (Diocese) | BA | 74 |
| Mher | 1st | Male | Turkey | Turkey | AGBU/Bolsahay Cultural Association | BA | 65 |
| Aras | 1st | Male | Turkey | Turkey | AGBU/Bolsahay Cultural Association | BA | 68 |
| Miran | 1st | Male | Turkey | Turkey | Knights of Vartan/AGBU | Elementary School | 80 |
| Sevan | 1st | Male | Turkey | Cyprus | Church (Diocese) | BA | 69 |
| Hayk | 1st | Male | Syria | Lebanon | Dashnak/ ARF-related organisations/institutions | High School | 24 |
| Narek | 1st | Male | Lebanon | Lebanon | Dashnak/ ARF-related organisations | High School | 41 |
| Bedros | 1st | Male | Lebanon | Lebanon | Multiple/ Nor Serount Cultural Association of Toronto | BA | 56 |
| Levon | 1st | Male | Lebanon | Lebanon | Dashnak/ARF-related organisations/institutions | Religious School | 30 |
| Vahan | 2nd | Male | Canada | Turkey and Lebanon (parents) | Dashnak/ARF-related organisations/institutions | BA | 31 |
| Yervant | 2nd | Male | Canada | Egypt | AGBU | BA | 41 |
| Avo | 2nd | Male | Canada | Turkey | AGBU | High School | 51 |
| Daron | 2nd | Male | Canada | Iran→Armenia (parents) | Church (Armenian Catholic and Diocese)/ Barev Centre/ ARF-related organisations/institutions | BA | 29 |
| Sam | 2nd | Male | Canada | Jerusalem | AGBU | BA | 51 |
| Razmik | 1,75th | Male | Canada | Lebanon | Church (Diocese)/Barev Centre/ ARF-related organisations/institutions | BA | 30 |
| Hovannes | 2nd | Male | Canada | Syria | AGBU | BA | 49 |
| Armen | 2nd | Male | Canada | Lebanon | Dashnak/ ARF-related organisations/institutions | MA | 36 |
| Narine | 1st | Female | Turkey | Turkey | AGBU | Primary School | 84 |
| Ani | 1st | Female | Jerusalem | Jerusalem | AGBU | BA | 60 |
| Sona | 1st | Female | Syria | Dubai | AGBU | MA | 57 |
| Yeraz | 1st | Female | Iran | Cyprus→Germany | Church (Diocese)/Barev Centre/ AGBU/ARF-related organisations/institutions | BA | 48 |
| Maral | 1st | Female | Egypt | Egypt | Dashnak/ ARF-related organisations/institutions | BA | 70 |
| Lucine | 1,25th | Female | Iran | Iran | AAT/ ARF-related organisations/institutions | BA | 27 |
| Tamar | 2nd | Female | USA | Lebanon | Church (Armenian Evangelical)/AGBU | BA | 45 |

| Neuvart | 3rd | Female | Canada | Turkey | AGBU | BA | 27 |
|---------|-----|--------|--------|--------|------|-----|-----|
| Shushan | 2nd | Female | Canada | Ethiopia→Syria→Lebanon and Iran (parents) | AGBU | BA | 30 |
| Eva | 2nd | Female | Canada | Cyprus and Egypt (parents) | Church (Evangelical)/Hayastan Foundation Toronto/AGBU/ ARF-related organisations | BA | 56 |

Establishing the generational features of the respondents was one of the most complicated parts of the research for me in some cases. Classifying the birthplace or the age and life stage of coming to the receiving country of an immigrant is a determinant for assigning a particular generation to the immigrants and thus to explore generational differences in the modes of acculturation, the degree of attachment to the homeland and the characteristics of ethnic origin amongst the immigrant group. Rumbaut (2004, pp.1161, 1165) states that when referring to the treatment of the second-generation – which he defines as "the U.S.-born and U.S.-socialized children of foreign-born parents" – by scholars, a discussion emerges that centres on the age of arrival in the host country. Rumbaut (2004, p.1166) therefore draws attention to the term "one-and-a-half or 1.5 generation", which he had himself coined in his previous studies with reference to Warner and Srole's (1945) analysis of the immigrant generation who entered the USA before and after the age of eighteen. Rumbaut (2004, p.1167) refines his analysis by dividing the age of arrival in the host country before the age of eighteen into three segments: early (ages 0-5) and middle (6-12) childhoods, and adolescent years (13-17), and labelled them the 1.75, 1.5 and 1.25 generations respectively. He scrutinised different degrees of cultural adaptation to the host society, transnational ties to ancestral land and the maintenance of ethnicity in each segment. In addition, these degrees are influenced by the environment in which respondents are raised in the host country. The degree of exposure to the cultural elements of their ethnic identity and the ease with which they can sustain ties with their homeland in the country of the settlement are determinant factors for native-born individuals' emotional attachments to their ethnicity and ancestral homeland (Waite and Cook, 2011).

Bakalian (1994, p.84n49), in her seminal work *Armenian-Americans*, describes the second-generation as those who were the US-born respondents of foreign-born parents and those "who arrived at or before age six", and further classified the third-generation as those who were US-born with one or both parents US-born, and the fourth-generation as those with

"both parents and at least one grandparent U.S.-born". Bakalian's rationale for considering children under six years old as the second-generation is related to their exposure to "the (public) school system and mass media in acculturation" (Bakalian, 1994, p.84n49).

In regard to the total sample, eight respondents had come to their host country between the ages of four and fifteen. In line with Rumbaut's analysis, three of them are the 1.75 generation, three are the 1.5 generation and two are the 1.25 generation. However, when I analysed their responses regarding their belonging to an Armenian ethnic provenance and the homeland, I did not notice any significant difference between the interviewees in the first two groups and the second-generation participants. The participants who had come to their host country between the ages of nine months and twelve years exhibited the same ethnocultural awareness as the second-generation participants. Nevertheless, participants who had come to their host country between the ages of nine and twelve years had a bit less of an imprint of the American lifestyle compared with those who were born in the USA or Canada. The respondents who had come to the USA at the age of four and below were more exposed to the host country. I grouped the participants who had arrived in the host country between the ages of birth and twelve years as the second-generation. I categorised those who had come to the North American cities at the age of thirteen and above as the first generation since they revealed more ethnic components of the new identity. In this regard, Bakalian's (1994, p.84n49) argument regarding exposure to the public school system comes to the fore. So even if not all the respondents in the aforementioned group had a primary school education in the host country, by virtue of mass media exposure and socialising with non-Armenians within the multicultural Anglo-Saxon milieu, the immigrants who had come to the receiving country under the age of thirteen featured second-generation characteristics in many respects, and they are referred to as the second-generation in this study.

In sum, regarding my study in the USA, I have fourteen first-generation, nineteen second-generation, four third-generation and six fourth-generation interviewees. In Canada, I have eighteen first-generation, eleven second-generation and one third-generation participants.

**Participant distribution by generation**
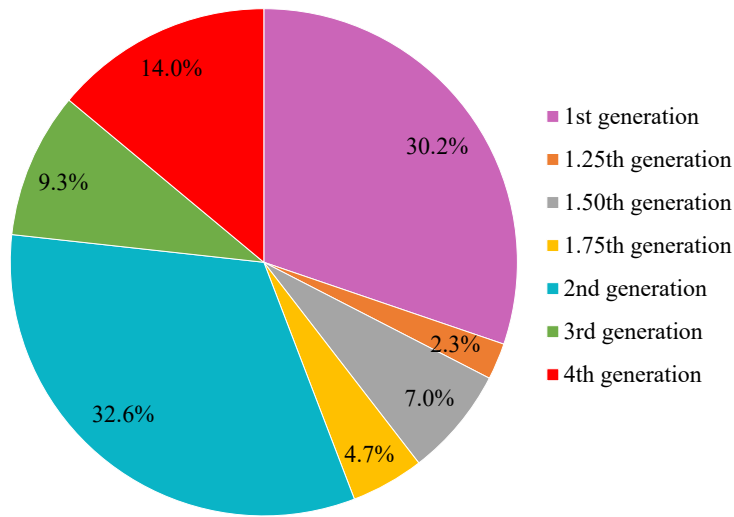


**Figure 9** Generational distribution amongst the sample in the USA

**Participant distribution by generation**
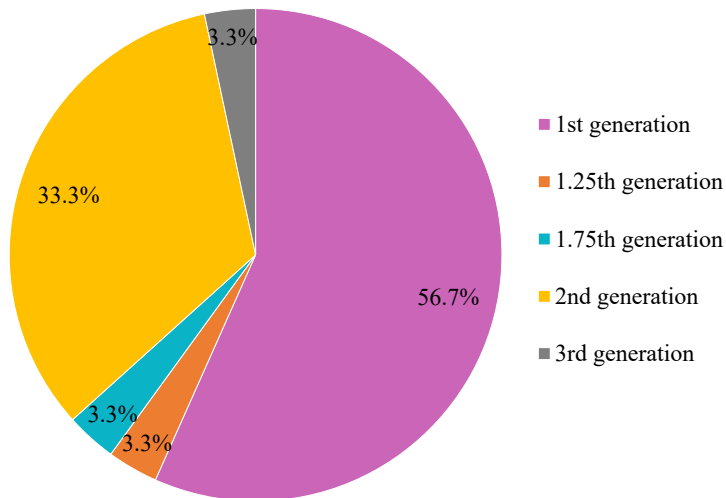


**Figure 10** Generational distribution amongst the sample in Canada

As I stated earlier, I also conducted some elite interviews. The majority of these interviewees had leading roles in their local organisations. I talked to some members who did not have a formal position in an organisation but who had an active role in the activities provided by the organisations in question and a wide-ranging knowledge regarding these organisations

themselves. As an example, I interviewed a participant who had no official position within the scope of the Hayastan Foundation Toronto, but who had an active role in organising the events of the Foundation externally. I did not integrate this organisation into Table 4 since this interviewee had no official connection with it. Similarly, I talked to one of the community members who undertook significant roles in a Saturday school in the Diocese church in Toronto. I also interviewed some community members who had a role in one Diocese, two Prelacy and one Evangelical Armenian church in New York City and Toronto. Not all of the interviewees from the churches were clergy. The names of their institutions are not included in Table 4 since the anonymity of the participants in this section of the research was required and guaranteed.

**Table 4** The organisations and institutions from which some of their representatives were interviewed.

City/Region

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Toronto** | Armenian Relief Society School of Toronto | Armenian General Benevolent Union | Nor Serount Cultural Association of Toronto | Armenian Association of Toronto | Bolsahay Cultural Association of Toronto |
| **New York City** | Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center | Armenian General Benevolent Union | Children of Armenia Fund | | |
| **Greater Boston Area** | Armenian National Committee of America-Eastern Chapter | Armenian Relief Society Eastern Chapter | Armenian International Women's Associations | Armenian Assembly of America[27] | National Association of Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) |

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[27] The Assembly has offices located in Washington DC, Glendale, California and Yerevan. I interviewed one of the key people who were actively engaged in the political aspects of this advocacy organisation in the Greater Boston Area at a local café.

Most of the interviews took place as casual conversations with a predetermined agenda and I encouraged the interviewees to speak freely during the conversation. I tape-recorded all the interviews after acquiring the interviewees' written informed consent and assuring them of their anonymity. Most of the interviews lasted at least one hour and in some cases up to six hours and took place mainly in public areas such as coffee shops or restaurants. Some interviews were conducted in a private setting such as participants' houses. Most of the interviews took place in one single session but I interviewed some participants more than once, mostly in an informal conversation. I conducted the interviews with the leaders of the main organisations mostly in their offices or the meeting rooms of the organisations. In some cases, I had some difficulty in arranging meetings with those informants who lived in a city where everyone is always busy.

Most of the interviews were conducted in English, but a few interviews with some participants who had migrated from Turkey were held in Turkish. The majority of the participants were highly educated, white-collar individuals from a metropolitan background in the New York City phase of the research. That is to say, they had predominantly graduated from a university. It can therefore be said that the social and educational background of the majority of those interviewed was urban middle class. In Toronto, however, half of the first generation interviewees had a university degree and the native-born participants had at least an undergraduate degree. Notably, the relatively recent arrivals from Syria and Lebanon in Toronto had generally graduated from a high school.

The year of arrival in the host country was significantly different between the Toronto interviewees and the much older community of New York City Armenians. The majority of the first-generation participants from Toronto had arrived in Canada between 1970 and 1989; whereas in New York City, arrivals between 1990 and 1999 were found, although three participants who were born abroad and came to the host country between the ages of three and twelve in these years raised the average for these years.

**Table 5** Year of arrival of the participants in the research sites[28]

| Year of Arrival | The USA | Canada[29] |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **1950-59** | 1 | 1 |
| **1960-69** | 3 | 2 |
| **1970-79** | 3 | 4 |
| **1980-89** | 2 | 6 |
| **1990-99** | 5 | 2 |
| **2000-09** | 3 | - |
| **Since 2010** | 2 | 3 |

Finally, the origins of the participants who were born abroad were largely divided into four countries; Turkey, Iran, Lebanon and Syria. There were also participants who came from post-Soviet countries, Egypt and Israel.

### 4.3.2 Participant observations

I began my fieldwork in the research sites by participating in various events hosted by different Armenian organisations and institutions at the city level. To be informed about the events, I frequently followed the official social media accounts of the organisations where flyers for relevant events are frequently posted. I regularly attended church services on Sundays to build an interaction with the communities of specific churches. I rotated my attendance at church services by going to a different church every Sunday. In addition to church services, I also attended services with a special liturgy for Christmas and Easter, anniversaries, celebrations, *kermes* (bazaars), luncheons, and church choir and dance performances taking place in church halls. I also attended several lectures and book presentations, which were held either in church halls or on the campus of Columbia

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[28] This table shows the years of arrival of the first-generation respondents and foreign-born participants who came to the countries between the ages of three and fifteen.

[29] One participant from Toronto preferred not to state the year of arrival in the country and one participant included in the table was a foreign participant who had arrived in the country at the age of nine months, which I count as a second-generation immigrant throughout the thesis.

University. I participated in fundraising events for Armenia arranged by different organisations in New York City and I visited an art exhibition which was entirely dedicated to Armenian culture in the Metropolitan Museum of Art and was a focus for several Armenians from the community mainly in New York and New Jersey.

In Toronto, I continued to attend regular church services following the same pattern. I regularly stopped by the Armenian Community Center of Toronto which is a very functional complex consisting of the ARF and its associated organisations as well as a Prelacy church. I attended some events which took place in the community centre. The events arranged by different organisations such as a documentary screening held by the Nor Serount Cultural Association also took place in the same community complex. I also attended Armenian Community Center Summer Festival between 12 and 14 July 2019. I had the opportunity to interact with a number of community members who attended the festival at which concerts were given by Armenian singers, food from Armenian cuisine was served, Armenia-origin products were sold and newly built houses in Armenia were advertised.

In addition to the community events, in both research sites, I was invited to home-gatherings, social events in which the younger members of the community met in pubs, restaurants, cafés or private settings where my informal conversations largely took place. I had an opportunity to hold unofficial interviews with prominent Armenian scholars in Armenian studies in Boston, New York City and Toronto. These informal conversations enabled me to identify the preliminary categories on which I needed to focus. I was also able "to document how persons simultaneously maintain and shed cultural repertoires and identities, interact within a location and across its boundaries, and act in ways that are in concert with or contradict their values over time" (Levitt and Glick-Schiller, 2004, p.1013).

During the fieldwork, I had opportunities to gain a better understanding of community members and their everyday lives by spending time in particular neighbourhoods, going to the restaurants and shopping at the grocery stores which belonged to members of the community in Bayside, Queens where Armenian people mostly live in New York City, and in the North York and Scarborough districts outside downtown Toronto. In New York City, the most interactive environment for me for observing both formal and informal community life was the Manhattan borough of the city where most of the community members gathered

together in various events, but in Toronto, the Community Center in North York was the place where the community interactions mostly took place. I took field notes not only to record my perceptions of the official interviews, but also to note down the new environments or places which I entered for the first time, or my first impressions and subsequent views about the people whom I met for the first time. Of necessity, my notes reflect my comments and my positionality as an outsider and a researcher in the field. It should also be noted that while conducting this fieldwork, I came across some situations where the line between being an insider and an outsider was blurred.

Finally, I reinforced my findings based on observations and in-depth interviews by using written and visual sources such as diaspora newspapers, electronic bulletins and informative videos online. In addition, the remarks and posts shared on the social media accounts of the organisations were suggestive for my data. I immersed myself in the secondary sources in the literature regarding the Armenian diaspora in the different sites and contexts.

## 4.4 The research process of the study

### 4.4.1 Access to and recruitment of the participants

I adopted the snowball sampling technique to recruit the participants. New York City and the City of Toronto both have dispersed Armenian communities. The dispersed nature of the communities enabled me to perceive the importance of the Armenian ethnic organisations as a bonding factor for fellow ethnics getting together. At the events which I attended, on the one hand, I had the opportunity to observe a general profile of Armenian participants depending on the event, and on the other, I arranged prospective interviews with the people whom I met during or after the event. I selected my respondents after short informal conservation varying in length from twenty minutes to an hour. In these conversations, I tried to understand the extent to which the person to whom I was talking took an interest in community affairs. In this way, I was able to gain preliminary ideas about their sense of belonging in regard to the community to some degree and to identify the channels which they used and which helped them to sustain their ties to the community.

There are four Armenian communities living in New York City and Toronto. These are Armenians who came from Turkey, Lebanon and Syria, Armenia and finally Iran. Depending

on the migration waves, the oldest Armenian communities in New York City and Toronto were Armenians who had migrated from Turkey and Middle Eastern countries. The newest community, in Toronto in particular, comprised Armenian refugees from Syria and Lebanon. The first-generation community members from each country whom I interviewed shared the same social networks and they knew each other, whereas the second- and subsequent generations were fused in the community regardless of their parents' sending countries.

After having completed each interview, I asked my informants to supply specific names of people who had Armenian descent and were known to have an affiliation with an Armenian organisation or were active participants in events hosted by Armenian diaspora organisations. Also, with these names and the support of my network of Armenian friends and acquaintances, I was able to reach some of the community leaders who had official roles in political and cultural organisations, or who played active roles in the mobilisation of the community members, or who worked voluntarily on behalf of the community.

I tried to ensure that I interviewed approximately the same number of participants in both countries. In the event, however, I was able to recruit only thirty participants in Toronto because of the slightly more protective nature of the community members in contrast to their ethnic cognates in New York City. Nevertheless, I believe that the number of the sample in Toronto can be adequately representative as the community is relatively newer and less dispersed than the one in New York City. It can therefore be considered that their community engagement and ethnic awareness were much higher compared with the community in New York City. I attempted to avoid recruiting similar participants by trying to select them from different genders and from different countries of origin, age, occupations, educational backgrounds and political or cultural affiliations. I was not able to get equal numbers of male and female participants in the two research sites due to the protective and hesitant attitude of the female members of the community towards me. Peculiarly, while accessing women participants with the help of my gatekeepers, I came across rare cases in which the female respondents sought permission from their husbands to be able to be interviewed by me. For a similar reason, although the women participants, especially the older ones, were eager to talk to me unofficially, they nevertheless showed a reluctant attitude to agreeing to attend an official interview with me. I noticed the same reluctance amongst some participants who were not white collar. They had come to the USA and Canada to work and earn money. To

participate in a research study that required a signed consent form made this segment of community members uneasy. I noticed the same hesitancy amongst them when I obtained their agreement at the beginning of the interview to make a tape recording, but after they had given their permission, they seemed to forget the existence of the tape recorder in the further phases of the conversation.

Finally, I assumed that my credibility and academic affiliations were being inquired into by the community members. My connections with the communities in both countries helped me to persuade the community members about the credibility and confidentiality of the research.

## 4.4.2   Ethical considerations

After having a short informal conversation with my potential interviewees about the topic of my research, if they were interested in taking part in an interview, they gave me their communication details to arrange a meeting. I mostly emailed them through my university email account with a detailed explanation of the purpose of my research. Before conducting the interviews, I again informed the participants about the research by giving them an information sheet and a participant consent form. These informed them about my research, my responsibilities and their rights to remain anonymous, the fact that the findings would be confidential, and that they were free to withdraw from the research within a particular period of time after the interview. I confirmed their consent by giving them a written date for the interview, and I kept a copy of the participant consent form containing their initials. Although I took mostly written consent from the participants, there were a few participants who were initially uncomfortable about the idea of signing a formal paper. This hesitation partly derived from my Turkish background. Even so, the fact that this study was conducted within the scope of a university located in England reassured them, and they gave their consent. I took verbal consent from one participant because of that participant's inability to read English.

I was aware that the possibility that their personal information and their affiliations with organisations or institutions being revealed would make them uneasy, I reassured them that their anonymity and the confidentiality of the collected data from the interviews would be meticulously respected. I explained that I would use pseudonyms when referring to their opinions throughout the study and that I would also keep the names of the representative

members of their community anonymous because I was aware that those interviewees might be concerned about their anonymity. Throughout the thesis, I, therefore, used pseudonyms to protect all of the participants. Also, when writing the empirical chapters, in some cases I had no need to use any pseudonyms nor to give any personal details regarding the participants in order to present the general tendency about each particular topic of inquiry.

During the interviews, I avoided any points that the participants were clearly not willing to talk about. I did not force them to give their insights on these particular topics and made space for them to articulate their views in whatever way they chose.

### 4.4.3 Positionality

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p.4) state that in ethnographic studies, mainly in participant observations, researchers might find themselves in the position that they have to "negotiate and renegotiate" with the participants even though there is a gatekeeper who enables the researcher to access them and they also reminded researchers that it should not be expected that the interviews will take place automatically but that a process of negotiation over the relationship between the researcher and a respondent might be required. In the current case, not only in the interview phase but also in every single step during my encounter with the community members, my identity was the most challenging issue for me when building relationships.

One of the main concerns which I pondered on and took several notes about during my fieldwork was my positionality in this research. Different dimensions of the researcher's identity should be underlined regarding the ways of conducting fieldwork, and the researcher's positionality is crucial in terms of the data gathering process. It is worth emphasising the positionality of the researcher as an insider or an outsider. In brief, it is necessary to clarify the position that researchers take while working with a group of people as an insider or an outsider because the researcher's position directly reflects on the research itself and the results. Breen (2007, p.163) defines insider researchers are those who belong to the group which they are studying, so according to this definition, researchers who do not have such belonging to the group which is being studied are outsiders.

In the context of the current study, the term 'insider' was used firstly for the people who were born as Armenians (*Hye/Hay*) and therefore have an Armenian genealogy. Secondly, people

who carry traditional Armenian identity markers such as "learning and using the Armenian language; attending Armenian church; caring for family members; or sharing common sentiments such as the importance of the family, homeland, and hatred of the Turks" can be regarded as having an Armenian identity (Bakalian, 1993, p.323) and are therefore insiders. At this point, it goes without saying that I was not an insider in the sense of Breen's and Bakalian's definitions. I was not Armenian by birth and did not present any Armenian identity. However, I was born in Diyarbakır (or Dikranagerd as Armenians call it) which is located in the south-east of Turkey and is a city well-known for its old Armenian and present-day Kurdish populations. This city is also of particular importance amongst Armenian communities not only for the populous Armenian past of the city but also for the existence of an Armenian-Apostolic Church, namely St. Giragos Armenian Church, which is one of the largest Armenian churches in the Middle East. The city, therefore, has a symbolic value for Armenians. For all these reasons, whenever I was asked 'Where are you from originally?', I replied 'Diyarbakır', and I received an immediate reaction such as 'You are Dikranagerdtsi!'[30] My origin and cultural proximities with the Armenians encouraged the community members to create a rapport with me. By the same token, my physical appearance is similar to that of an Armenian in their eyes. I therefore sometimes came across questions about whether I was able to speak my 'mother tongue', by which they meant the Armenian language. Moreover, on several occasions, I was encouraged by the community members whom I met to speak Armenian even though I am not fluent in that language.

Of all the similarities which I shared with the community, having an Armenian great-grandmother was the most determinative characteristic which enabled me to make significant progress in the field research. Although my mother tongue is Turkish, my mixed ethnic background enabled me to overcome prejudice towards the 'other' of the Armenian identity. This helped my participants to relate to me in a way, which meant that I was socially accommodated as an insider to some extent throughout my interaction with the members of the community. The feeling of familiarity varied depending on the geographical origin of the interlocutor. For instance, I was able to understand the mindset of the people coming from

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[30] -tsi *(-gh)* is a suffix in Armenian used to denote the geographical provenance from which someone hails.

Turkey or the Middle Eastern countries. However, I sometimes felt that I was estranged by the cultural codes of a particular group of Armenians who hailed from Armenia or post-Soviet-linked countries such as Georgia. Hence, the cultural similarities and differences deriving from the various geographical provenances resulted in some limitations to my 'insiderness'.

Another dimension of my identity which became salient during the fieldwork was my gender. Being a woman researcher in the fieldwork phase of a study can be a facilitative factor depending on the nature of the research. My gender ruled out me from being seen as a political threat to them. But at the same time, it can be disadvantageous, as in the case of the ethnographic research of Loftsdóttir on the WoDaaBe Fulani, a small minority in Niger (2002). Women ethnographers can find themselves vulnerable in various situations and might need to adopt a particular way to protect themselves and proceed in the field. Peggy Gould (1970, p.6, cited in Loftsdóttir, 2002, p.309) describes several techniques which could be used by a female ethnographer to protect herself, some of which can be "[F]inding a man or men whose role enables them to serve as protectors", "moving in with a family" or "taking or being assigned an already existing role that minimises or neutralises sexuality or is traditionally a protected one, as 'child,' 'sister,' 'grandmother'" or "working chiefly with the women and children of the community or living in the field with a husband or a team of fellow workers".

From the beginning of the fieldwork, the community members, especially the older ones, perceived me variously as their daughter, little sister or distant cousin who has come from their ancestral land. In a similar vein to the protective behaviour of community members, specifically of male elders particularly towards women, they felt responsible for my safety and security during the fieldwork. Even so, the tendency to be protective should not be regarded as an indication of the existence of some kind of gender segregation amongst community members. Generally speaking, it can be stated that there is an equality between males and females, and Bakalian comments over a quarter of a century ago that "the absolute authority of the historical Armenian patriarch has disappeared" (Bakalian, 1994, p.373). Nevertheless, even though it is not possible to generalise for every Armenian family, some customary practices peculiar to the traditional Armenian family structure still persist. Berberian (2005, p.10) underlines the fact that Armenians as a community had concentrated

in Anatolia, Iranian Azerbaijan, Isfahan and after the First World War in Arab territories where the majority of inhabitants were Muslim peoples. As a result of the long-term interaction of these geographies' communities with each other, cultural-legal norms such as moral norms, women's dress codes, and the role of women in marriage are shared by Armenians with the majority of people living in the same region, and thus Armenian culture traditionally includes patriarchal belief systems, despite regional and cultural differences.

The everyday life of Armenian women has undeniably been transformed over the generations in the diaspora. Even today in the diaspora, however, it is still possible to trace Armenian women's traditional roles in the family and in social life as a key figure, as Berberian (2000, p.75, cited in Berberian 2005, p.12) says, in "reproducing their children, having influence in the lives of their children, being socializers of their children, reproducing the culture through dress, behavior, and the use of language as well as culinary and other customs". From my experiences during the fieldwork, however, it is possible to say that strong male possessiveness towards women was limited to a few examples which were mostly specific to the families which had recently immigrated to North America. During my fieldwork experience, some Armenians' parent-like treatment of me was familiar to me from the traditional Turkish family roots. This is another case in which I did feel like an insider to some extent. To be a foreign woman student who lived alone had a significant effect on the initial reaction of the community members whom I met. I was always asked if I needed anything which they could help me with. Especially the elder members of the community approached me in a parental fashion, and they sometimes prepared a pack of takeaway food for me when they heard that I lived alone.

Conducting fieldwork is a process, which includes different levels of relationships, from power relationships to personal, intimate rapports. First, I was not working in a place where the power relationships between Armenians and Turks were constructed in favour of either one of them. The USA and Canada are non-partisan countries in which the interaction between the two communities is equal in the diaspora. Not only does this equality give the Armenians the freedom to say whatever they want to say in any way they wish, but it also enabled me to understand and excavate their understandings, points of view and representations of their part of identity which is nourished by the 'other' – Turkishness. If I had conducted this research in Turkey with Armenians from Turkey/Bolsahays as a Turkish

speaker, the research would have been exposed to more power relations due to the considerable amount of hesitance amongst the Armenian community in Istanbul because of my ethnicity, and the data might have been skewed and not representative.

Since the value of my research depended on the experiences of the participants, the extent to which personal accounts and remarks reflect the 'truth' or how possible experiences can be regarded as a foundation for knowledge might be questioned. Riessman and Quinney (2005, p.395) point out that some narrators relate their experiences in ways which engage and persuade, whereas other narratives can leave the audience sceptical and invite counter-narratives. Needless to say, the answers of my participants cannot be thought of as independent from my positionality as a researcher such as my nation, gender, race and so on. Skeggs (1997, p.28) states that "all experience is processed through practice, discourse, and interpretation. […]. Representations are interpretations". This personal representation also intertwines with the collective practice, discourse and interpretation of the group to which the individual belongs. So personal accounts are mostly embedded in the political and cultural collective memory of the group (Halbwachs, 1992). I am therefore well aware of the fact that there might be consciously or unconsciously unsaid parts of the narratives which are embedded in the collective experiences of being Armenian.

Of necessity, I felt myself an outsider at the very first step in every conversation. My positionality was echoed in relation to the 'other' of the Armenian identity, even to its 'enemy' in some cases. To conduct this study within the scope of an English university alleviated the tension deriving from the hesitation of the community members towards my Turkish identity and led them to take a more objective stance concerning my work. Nevertheless, on some occasions, I felt that I was being questioned about my 'true' intent in carrying out this research project. At first, the detailed questions of the informants about my educational and ancestral backgrounds gave me the impression that I was being screened by the community members whom I interviewed. I did take some cases personally, and I met some attitudes which did not enable me to present my academic position in this research. My initial feelings were ones of disappointment, fear and self-doubt relating to being rejected for official or unofficial conversations in some cases. Over time, I realised that all these severe reactions were not directed at me personally and that I was only positioned in the collective

memory of the community. The wall which was built against me was quickly demolished and that allowed me to confront my 'other-ness' in the minds of my research subjects.

I cannot say that the prejudice towards me can be generalised to the Turkish people or the Turkish state. It is not possible to say that the word 'Turk' is used in a derogatory way by the Armenian community. It can therefore be said that 'the strong hostility against the Turks' was replaced by a 'hesitance' in the interaction with a Turk. I even conducted some interviews in Turkish with some community members, especially those who were born and raised in Syria, who regarded this language as the language of the enemy, even though they preferred to speak it with me. Even so, it is necessary to report that this sentiment was shared by very few of the community members with whom I interacted. Nevertheless, a considerable number of the Armenians in the diaspora, mainly from Lebanon and Syria, who know the Turkish language specifically refused to speak Turkish with me. Over time, I felt that this segment of my interviewees became much more comfortable while talking to me even if they still maintained a distance from some aspects of Turkish identity. Moreover, at the end of all of the formal and informal conversations, many members of the community told me that they could guide me in a direction useful to my fieldwork. The way that I regularly participated in almost every community event including church services influenced the ways in which the Armenian participants approached my academic intention and they led me to the right people whom they thought could be helpful for my research.

During the moments when I felt a high level of rapport with the participants, I reminded myself that feeling like an insider might lead to feeling an "illusion of sameness" (Pitman, 2002, pp.285-286) in which the agent considers that s/he is acting in a similar manner to the group of people who share similar identities with the agent. In my case, the dilemma related to my cultural similarities with my research group which I knowingly or unknowingly faced forced me to manage my objectivity with regard to the participants. While seeking to improve the rapport with the participants, I was also trying to keep the necessary distance to enable me to analyse the data in a sensible and objective way as much as I could. In a nutshell, the sense of familiarity in terms of similar geographical roots in Anatolia which I shared with the participants marked me as an insider and enabled me to be largely accepted by the community, but the same geographical factors also labelled me as an outsider.

Finally, it should be noted that if this study had been conducted by a member of the community or an Armenian living in the diaspora, or by a researcher who was not of Turkish or Armenian origin, the content of the answers or the scale of the data might have been different. I wanted to use an impartial lens, as long as the interpretative approach allowed when analysing and categorising the interviews and field observations as a researcher who was also an indirect participant in the analysis.

## 4.5   Data analysis

I used the qualitative method of thematic analysis and adopted coding to analyse the extensive empirical data consisting of excerpts from interviews, participant observation, field notes and printed and visual sources (see, for example, Saldaña, 2016). After transcribing all the interviews, I uploaded them onto the NVivo 12 software together with other notes based on my observations. I used the software to review all of the coded data and to relate them to each other, rather than using its functions in a detailed way. I then reviewed the transcriptions to identify important and relevant quotations referring to the particular themes which emerged as a result of having encoded and categorised the data. During the first cycle of coding the transcriptions, I adopted several coding methods. First, I applied attribute coding to identify the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants which I divided into the different places of settlement before starting simultaneous coding for overlapped data for two different elemental coding methods (Saldaña, 2016, pp.83, 94).

As the elemental coding method, I employed structural coding to identify related content-based or conceptual phrases in the different segments of the data regarding responses to the research questions (Saldaña, 2016, p.98). I then used *in vivo* coding by applying terms and concepts from the direct statements of the participants to understand more deeply their perspectives regarding the topic of inquiry (Saldaña, 2016, pp.105-106). I bore process coding in mind as the purpose of the research was to uncover "repetitive forms of action-interaction" or the "routines and rituals" of the participants both in their everyday lives and in their community engagements (Saldaña, 2016, p.111). My coding approach also drew on affective methods consisting of "emotion, value and versus coding" (Saldaña, 2016, p.124). In this way, I was able to identify the "the belief and meanings that underline action" and to

present "how logic and emotion combine to influence how persons respond to events or handle problems through action and interaction" (Corbin and Strauss, 2015, pp.32-33).

After the first cycle of coding, I thematised the coded and categorised data to "bring meaning and identity to a recurrent experience" of the participants in a holistic or meaningful whole approach (DeSantis and Ugarriza, 2000, p.362; Saldaña, 2016). I re-read and reviewed the coded and thematised data several times in order to recode or subcode them and assemble them into relevant categories and to interrelate themes with each other for analysis within the context of the different cases in the study (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Finally, by integrating the main themes in the empirical chapters in the framework of "a conceptual map" (Creswell and Creswell, 2018, p.272), I sought to present a meaningful picture of the participants' views on the relevant topics.

To sum up, in this chapter, I explained my research design, the research approach of the study and the research process during the fieldwork. I detailed my research methods which mainly consist of semi-structured interviews and participant observation captured by my fieldwork in two sites. I introduced the characteristics of the participants, and the Armenian diaspora organisations and institutions focused on in the research. I also discussed the ethical considerations of the study and my positionality during the research. Finally, I summarised my thematic analysis of the data and coding technique.

In the next section, I will explore the sense of belonging and self-representations of the Armenians participating in this research, as ethnic and diasporic Armenians living in multicultural societies. I will examine how the community members from the two different countries perceive their identities, construct their relations with their communities and locate themselves in wider North American society.

## Chapter 5. The articulation of the Armenian identity in the diaspora

## 5.1 Introduction

It is difficult fully to encompass the components of any ethnic identity which is performed in a host country when considering its fragmented nature, reflecting multiple identities and belongings, and to confine them to a cluster consisting of a well-described set of definitions. Migrants' multiple attachments thus might reflect "the 'in-between-ness of belonging'" (Krzyżanowski and Wodak, 2008, p.107). Furthermore, migrants' desire to be a part of the host nation for socioeconomic reasons may create dilemmas in terms of their emotional commitment to individual or collective ethnic identities in their everyday lives.

In this chapter, the experiences of the Armenian diasporic people who define themselves first and foremost as Armenian will be explored through their articulations within the context of interaction with their ethnic cognates and the host country-specific conditions. There are three notable arguments of this chapter. Firstly, the definition of the identity itself varies amongst community members living in different settings. Secondly, the boundaries of Armenianness are not a fixed category, and the external/internal definitions of the group are based on the political and cultural background of the community members. In particular, discussion on the boundaries of identity emerges in the interaction of the community members with each other. Thirdly, Armenianness, as with many other ethnic identities amongst people who are exposed to countries other than their ethnic homeland, is reshaped in line with the living conditions of the host country. At this point, the chapter also aims to address dilemmas regarding the sense of belongings of individuals to an Armenian identity that clashed with their being a part of the host country. Clashes which, in turn, impacted on their notions of ethnic identity.

In section 5.1, I portray the discourses of the Armenians about their belonging. I will attempt to present how Armenianness is constructed in personal articulations by

analysing their experiences of being Armenian. I will divide this section into two parts. In the first part, I consider the observations of the first-generation Armenians whose identities are less hybrid compared with the subsequent generations. The second part reflects the second- and subsequent generation Armenians' views on Armenian identity. Generational differences in the definition of Armenianness are thus illuminated. In section 5.2, the boundaries of identity are discussed. I indicate how identity is sometimes framed on the basis of political and geographical differences within the community. By so doing, I highlight different understandings of the Armenian identity of the sub-communities which are divided by territorial ties. This discussion emphasises the contentious nature of identity depending on intra-community relations. Finally, in the last section, the migration experiences of the Armenians to the host countries will be outlined, and the experience of being Armenian in the host country will be examined. The ethnic diversity of the North American countries enables immigrants to live in multiple sets in terms of language, religion and culture. However, it might also create an ambivalent feeling for diaspora communities who oscillate between clinging on to their ethnicity or being assimilated. I discuss the extent to which the differences between the host culture and Armenian culture are consistent with each other and analyse how the host country-specific social and cultural milieu change the identity of individuals.

## 5.2   Debates on the Armenian identity: revisiting the definition of the Armenianness in the diaspora

In the previous chapters, I stated that Armenian diasporic identity is classified as "victim diaspora" by Cohen (2008, p.18) and this classification derives from the first reason for the mass dispersion. Then, I showed that this classification is largely valid for the Western Armenian diaspora who migrated from the countries of the Middle East. However, I suggested that Cohen's approach is open to criticism and that even though the founding feature of the Armenian diaspora is formed by the exile, the diasporic identity of the Armenian diaspora in the North American countries, as it is presumably true in other parts of the world, has been influenced by the varying circumstances of more recent migration waves.

Başer (2013, pp.80-81) draws attention to some academic studies which gather all members of a community under the umbrella of "diaspora" and criticises the resultant overgeneralisation. It is questionable to group all members of a particular community living in a host country in the same subset of a transnational phenomenon, diaspora. Rather attention should be paid to an individual's sense of belonging. Therefore, in this section, through exploring the perspectives of Armenians from different generations who identify themselves as part of the Armenian diaspora, I address the chief bases on which the Armenians construct their identification markers, which lead them to feel a part of the community.

*First-generation Armenians*

Respondents were first asked how they understand the nature of Armenianness in the diaspora, and who constitutes an Armenian. The founding elements of Armenian identity are thus seen to vary in line with individuals' self-understandings amidst the complexity of the environment in which they interact with the conditions of the dominant culture in their host countries. The general tendency of the answers from two places of settlement, Toronto and New York City is that there is no singular standard of Armenianness. Indeed, the prevailing view amongst community members, is that whoever feels Armenian is Armenian. It is a shared opinion that it is very difficult to draw the lines around the Armenian identity, given its multiple nature in the diaspora. As one of the respondents, Lucine, stated, when I asked her what being an Armenian means in the diaspora:

> That's a very complicated question. I don't think there's a straight answer. I don't think it's easy. I think it's different for every person. It comes from what your identity with. It's the language. It's the community. It's the perspective. […]. It's not a 'must' to be an Armenian, but then again, it's not a must for anyone to be full Armenian to consider themselves as Armenian, so where do you draw the line? I don't know.

(1st generation, Toronto, female)

Nevertheless, more than half of first-generation Armenians from Toronto find it important to keep Armenian culture as a condition for being Armenian in the diaspora. The difficulty in framing Armenian performing in the host country highlights the differences in the self-identifications even amongst the participants who prioritise

culture as the most important criterion to be Armenian. Even though culture is emphasised as the prominent component to be Armenian, less than half of the respondents in Toronto consider the Armenian language, which is one of the most determinative cultural factors shaping identity, as a core element to be and to remain Armenian in the diaspora. Zaven is amongst the minority who perceive language as an indispensable element of Armenian culture:

> I suppose the main thing starts with the language. I think the base of everything must be the language. Even though there are people and studies that say "you can be Armenian even if you don't speak Armenian". I've never accepted that. You can be kind of surface Armenian.

> (1st generation, Toronto, male)

Similarly, one of the activists from Nor Serount emphasises the importance of language, as well as religion, as a way of preservation of the Armenian values outside the homeland:

> As a culture, we have to preserve our language. I am not saying you have to learn properly, but at least understand and recognize the alphabet, what it is, even though you cannot read it fully. You need to be familiar with your language at least.

> (1st generation, Toronto, male)

As to first-generation interviewees in New York City, fluency in the Armenian language is not at the forefront in their definitions of Armenianness. The majority of my participants in the USA, who are actively engaged in community affairs, state that having a command of the language is not determinant for being Armenian. It is evident, however, that the mother tongue is the first reference point for identity amongst the first-generation respondents. For example, according to Narod, ancestry and culture are associated with each other in Armenian identity:

> I have a Bulgarian passport and everything, but I'm Armenian. Armenianness comes first for me. It's like in my blood, the first language that I spoke was Armenian, my first words in Armenian, I learnt Bulgarian in kindergarten. My parents and my grandmother would talk to me in Armenian at home.

> (1st generation, New York City, female)

The first-generation respondents in the New York and Toronto communities state that the dominant language used at home is Armenian. That Armenian is mainly spoken at

home is regarded as a struggle for the retention of the identity of the next generations in the host countries. In addition to this, first-generation participants prefer their mother tongue in which they think that they articulate themselves best while speaking with their children. Siroun, who came to New York after a long migration journey starting from Georgia to Armenia, stated that she lived in Russia for a while just after the independence of Armenia, before coming to the USA. She added that when they lived in Russia, she used to talk more in Russian with her children since she went to Russian schools, which were deemed very prestigious and provided a high quality of education at the time of the Soviet Union, in Georgia and Armenia.[31] However, after moving to the USA, she states that she noticed that language plays an important role in keeping her family's identity alive:

> When I came to this country, I realized that if I am not speaking Armenian with them it's going to be lost. It is a must to speak Armenia at home. It's like a home, family language.

> (1st generation, New York City, female)

For some of the first-generation Armenians, Armenianness is circumscribed and it is not enough to speak the language to be Armenian; to be truly Armenian requires immersion into every corner of the culture. Narek, who migrated from Lebanon to Toronto was amongst those who conceive of Armenian identity as a way of behaviour penetrating into every corner of daily life:

> To me, it's living like an Armenian, speaking, eating in Armenian, like everything. It's all about culture, you know, to speak Armenian at home. Canadian Armenians speak English at home.

> (1st generation, Toronto, male)

When I ask what he means by Canadian Armenians, Narek defines the Armenians who were born and raised in Canada as Canadian Armenians. Narek regards the Armenians

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[31] This point is underscored in the doctoral thesis of Shushan Karapetian (2014) on "Eastern Armenian Heritage Language Speakers in Los Angeles". Karapetian (2014, p.175), by citing Cowe (1992) and Bakalian (1993), indicates that even though the first and official language of Soviet Armenia was Armenian, "Russian dominated in the higher social spheres, as proficiency in Russian was an essential vehicle for upward mobility in the Communist system".

of the second- and later generations as 30 per cent Armenians, stressing that second- and later generations of Armenians live more in the cultural values of Canada, rather than with reference to traditional Armenian markers. Bakalian (1994, p.307) states that foreign-born Armenians, mainly those who migrated "from the Middle East", see the maintenance of the language as vital "at all costs".

Bakalian (1994, p.185) has previously argued that Armenianness is a choice amongst American-born people of Armenian descent, in contrast to the majority of Armenians in the Middle East, where identity "is ascribed by birth". Similarly, the majority of the first-generation Armenians in Toronto also acknowledged that sustaining Armenian identity in the diaspora is based on an individual choice. According to Yeraz, who left Iran at the age of thirteen, ancestry is the chief determinant of Armenianness, rather than linguistic ability, even though she regards language as very important. Furthermore, she emphasises that every child who is raised in a multicultural society, such as Canada, may not have an opportunity to learn their language. Thus she concludes that self-identification as an Armenian in the host country does not depend on fluency in the Armenian language, but reflects a preference to relate oneself to the identity and to be part of the community:

> If you don't want to identify yourself as Armenian with that language, with the culture, with volunteering in the community, it doesn't matter if you speak the language or not. If you do not feel that you're connected, who can force you to tell you are or you are not? […]. For example, my child... He tried to go out and learn the language in his own way. […]. If a child has that capability, that ability, he needs to want to be [an Armenian]. He wasn't even speaking Armenian, but he so much felt that, and he wanted it. There's nothing that he stopped being Armenian and feeling Armenian. He's much better Armenian than anyone else that probably…
>
> (1st generation, Toronto, female)

An activist from Nor Serount recounted that the organisation carries out its duties to protect the heritage and legacy and to pass them down to the next generations as the community members who will play an active role in creating awareness. Yet he still accepts that the maintenance of Armenian culture is a personal choice. His organisation can teach the language, but it cannot force anyone to use the language:

Armenian is a choice in the diaspora. That choice is entrenched in you. It can come up. I cannot force you to do this. My belief is that you can ignore being Armenian all your life, one day you are going to wake up and realize that you are an Armenian.

(1st generation, Toronto, male)

It is also evident that the definition of Armenian identity amongst first-generation Armenians is influenced by taking account of subsequent generations' performance of being Armenian. In one of the interviews, my respondent, Sona, stated that the reality that the new generation does not fully reflect the traditional values of Armenian identity is acceptable in the context of the multicultural environment of their living. According to her perspective, these values are still important but carrying out them is not a "must" to be Armenian. I asked her if subsequent generations are therefore considered less Armenian, as they do not represent the Armenian culture in the same way as their predecessors. Sona replied as follows:

The definition of the Armenian identity has changed. […]. Globalization affects every ethnic group. Yes, they are different, but they are Armenian. Because like feeling Armenian is kind of being Armenian. If you go back... Like, look at Armenians in Armenia themselves, didn't they change from the way their grandparents used to be? They did, but they are Armenians. So, the same thing is happening to the younger generation, they are changing. They are different to what we wear, but they are still Armenian, and feeling is being. It's equal.

(1st generation, Toronto, female)

One of the first-generation activists, Dikran, who has been actively involved in community affairs during the last sixty years since he arrived in the USA, stated that the first thing that the Armenians did was to open the schools, after having founded the church to keep the Armenian identity alive in the host countries. However, he underlines the importance of the interaction with independent Armenia for younger generations. Dikran states that the youngest generation of the Armenians change when they go to Armenia and that their Armenianness is bound to a concrete homeland in a different way from his generation, who had ties with an imaginary Armenia in their minds. He highlights the strong attachment of the new generation to the homeland, which affects their Armenian experiences in the diaspora.

In Toronto and New York communities, it appears that religion is strongly associated with ethnic identity. During conversations with the majority of the participants, they gave examples from Christianity to indicate its affinity to Armenian culture, reflecting themes such as hospitability. Notwithstanding the tolerance of some Armenians towards the non-practising of religion in the diaspora, religion continues to play a significant role in the cultural baggage of Armenians for the immigrant-generation informants in my research. Today, as Jirair, a first-generation diaspora member of the New York community, states, church attendance is losing its power amongst the younger generation in the USA, and it is limited to gathering for Christmas and Easter, or ceremonies such as weddings and funerals. However, it is possible to assert from the results of interviews conducted and my field observations, that even though the physical attendance at church services has declined amongst subsequent generations, most individuals that I interacted with during the fieldwork identified themselves as Christian, even if they do not practice their religion. Jirair defines Armenianness as rooted in its key cultural component of Christianity:

> What I understand from Armenians is that they are ethnic groups who have a very deep religious history, and have always been spread out throughout the world, a country that has always been conquered by neighboring empires and miraculously survived when others have not been able to survive. And I also believed to an extent, the church had played a major role in the survival of the people, especially in the diaspora.

> (1st generation, New York City, male).

By contrast, some of the respondents, especially those who immigrated from Turkey, did not prioritise Christianity in the definition of Armenian identity. Islamicised Armenians are centred in this discussion for them. According to their perspective, an Armenian can be Armenian even though he or she has converted to Islam. For example, Markar, who came to Toronto from Istanbul almost forty-five years ago, specifically focuses on the Islamicised Armenians who are children and grandchildren of the Armenians who converted to Islam during the era of the 1915 incidents and lived as Muslims in Turkey:

> Anyone who feels Armenian is Armenian for me, even if one is not Armenian genetically, as long as they feel close to the culture. He cannot be a citizen of Armenia but can be Armenian. I care about this issue in terms of hidden Armenians. There are hundreds of hidden Armenians who were forcibly

Islamicized and lived as a Kurdish or Turkish for two or three generations, realized and hid their Armenianness and told their children or grandchildren their identities. These people did not know the Armenian language and they didn't have much to do with being Armenian. The restoration and reopening of St. Giragos Armenian Church[32] in Diyarbakır encouraged the current hidden Armenians to disclose themselves.

(1st generation, Toronto, male)

One of the Toronto-Armenians, Narine, who lived as Muslim until the age of thirteen in Turkey, and was baptised when she moved to Istanbul, shares her sentiments about the definition of Armenians:

An Armenian is an Armenian even if he/she does not speak the language, even if he/she lives as a Muslim. For example, my aunt used to live as a Muslim, they accepted their religion, they love their husbands [Turkish and Muslim] and they had children. Armenianness is possible without even being a Christianity. If you want to be Armenian or Christian, you can be baptised by stating your desire to be Armenian in the church. You don't have to be born as Armenian.

(1st generation, Toronto, female)

It can thus be said that the Armenian identity is first defined as an ethnic belonging by the Armenians, especially by the Bolsahays. The majority of the ten first-generation Armenians from Turkey interviewed prioritised national attachment over religion, although they identify themselves as Christian. For the latter label did not mean that they are not engaged in church activities. The church engagement is high amongst first-generation Bolsahays as well.

Alin who was born and raised in Iran and has ten-year of experience living in Armenia finds Armenian identity in the diaspora very different from the Armenian identity in

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[32] St. Giragos Armenian Church, which is located in Diyarbakır/Dikranagerd in Turkey, is well-known for the fact that it was the biggest Armenian church in the Middle East until 1915. The church was inactive and destroyed since the First World War. The collapsed church was reconstructed by the collaboration of the Armenian Istanbul Patriarchate and Diyarbakır municipal government in 2009 and it was opened to worship in 2011 (Ayata, 2015, p.810). The diasporic Armenians also organised many events to make a financial contribution to the construction. However, today the church was significantly damaged due to the conflicts between the Turkish military and police officers and Kurdish militants in 2016 and its reconstruction is underway with government supports.

Armenia. According to Alin, diasporic identity is more nationalistic compared to that found in Armenia. Alin also argues that hybridity of any identity renders identity itself flexible and thus establishing a practical ground for identity to survive in multicultural societies:

> I have very mixed identities in my character because I was born in Iran and brought up there, for almost 20 years of the main part of my life was in Iran. However, I lived in Armenia for about 10 years which I wouldn't say has shaped my identity as being an Armenian, but it definitely gave me a different prospect. Because the Armenian identity built overseas in the diaspora is very different from the Armenian identity in Armenia, but the winners are people who have mixed up those because the mix is the one that survives and is sustainable. You can't have only diaspora identity, it's very nationalistic. It's very limited. […]. Diaspora Armenian identity is very rigid in many senses. Our diaspora values are very focused on the genocide. However, the Armenian identity built in Armenia is very different because it's very less influenced by religion, it's very less influenced by nationalistic ideology.

(1st generation, New York City, female)

An explanation for the finding that Armenian identity as constructed in Armenia is less strongly linked to religion than is true of diasporic Armenianness might be related to the influence of the Soviet Union and its ideological approach towards religion on former citizens of Soviet Armenia. Özdemir (2021) notes that the Armenian immigrants from Armenia in Los Angeles (also known as *Hayastantsis* in Armenian) attend church services at lower levels than found amongst Western Armenians, who previously formed the core of the Armenian diaspora in the USA.[33] It is also worth noting that Armenia-Armenians[34] are few in my research sample, which is composed of the active diaspora members in the community in Toronto and New York City. The main reason is that I did not encounter many Hayastantsis to interview while conducting my fieldwork in two

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[33] Özdemir (2021) also states that most of Hayastantsis, who do not centralise the religion in their lives, feel alienated in the diasporic space including the church whose dress codes or attitudes are dominantly influenced by the Western Armenian cultural characteristic.

[34] The recent immigrants in the Armenian community in the USA are mainly composed of Hayastantsis and they are mostly concentrated in Los Angeles; in the case of Toronto, in addition to the Armenians from Armenia, the Armenians who fled from Syria War, which broke out in 2011, are newcomers of the Toronto community.

cities.[35] Based on my observations, they do attend the activities run by the diasporic Armenians, but they are less numerous than the Western Armenians. I will tackle the meaning of being Hayastantsis from the perspective of the Western Armenians in the following subsection and will highlight the contentious parts of the identity in intra-community relations.

Some of the participants from both cities underscore that Armenian identity is a constructed phenomenon. Artun, who has lived in the USA for more than forty years, summarised this construction with words that he first stated in Armenian: "First humanity, then Armenianness".[36] While Artun states that the concept of being an Armenian is linked to family relations that fight to preserve the Armenian identity and make him a part of this struggle, he emphasises that being a part of humanity exceeds all national identities.

To summarise the general perspective of self-identification amongst first-generation respondents; even though they represent, preserve and try to transfer cultural components of the Armenian identity, they do not have an objective set of rules for accepting anyone as Armenian. They seem to be tolerant towards different interpretations of identity, especially in a changing world. Therefore, their viewpoints regarding Armenianness are not firmly categorised, especially in relation to the second and later generations who do not penetrate into the culture as they do.

*Second and later generations*

Even though third- and fourth-generation Armenians were involved in my research, the dominant group is the second-generation amongst those who are born in both the USA and Canada. Therefore, my main examination of the self-understanding of Armenianness

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[35] In New York City, although the community is greatly dispersed, there are some pockets of Armenians concentrated in a particular place. Brooklyn is one of those places where the Armenians from the former Soviet Union, Russia and recently Armenia prefer to live in the city. The district is also known for its Russian residents. It is seen that cultural intimacy is a pull factor for immigrants to concentrate in the same area.

[36] Araç martgutyun hedo hayutyun (In Armenian: *Առաջ մարդկություն յետոյ հայություն.*). I give thanks Pınar Karakılçık for her help that enabled me to translate it in English.

will derive from the thinking of second-generation community members, although this subsection also includes the insights of later generations on Armenian identity.

The majority of second-generation Armenians in the research first and foremost describe themselves as Armenian. It commonly appears that they needed to define themselves as Armenians born in the USA or Canada. It is also evident that they do not prioritise or emphasise one aspect of this dual identity when labelling themselves. However, most of them identify themselves as Armenian-American or Armenian-Canadian, rather than vice-versa. The Armenian identity is significantly hyphenated amongst Armenians born and raised in the host country; as the Armenian Diaspora Survey (ADS) conducted in 2019 proves, being found in 61% of overall diasporic communities in the research, and as the Armenian Diaspora Survey conducted in 2018 in Boston, Pasadena, Cairo and Marseille, shows, with 44% for the second, 39% for the third generations (Sahakyan, 2020, p.11; Tchilingirian, 2019a, p.46). The Armenians' dual ethnonational identity seems not to lead to an internal tug-of-war amongst those born and living in the host countries on the east coast of North America. On the contrary, they enjoy the cultural components of both identities and bring each to the forefront when it seems appropriate. It appears that an intermediate area is constructed, in which neither identity is excluded. Nevertheless, one of my respondents, Vahan, who considers himself first and foremost Armenian in ethnic background, makes a distinction between ethnicity and nationality. He states that his birthplace is a constituent he takes very seriously and underlines that he is also a very proud Canadian. Vahan argues that expressions of hyphenated identity may lead to factions in the community:

> I don't like putting labels. […]. It can create divisions, I think, not just in the Armenian context, but in any context as soon as you start identifying groups and singling them out or putting labels on them, you could create certain divisions and although I'm very proud to be a Canadian Armenian, I think by labelling people as different –hyphenated Armenians can create some issues.
>
> (2nd generation, Toronto, male)

As a matter of fact, Vahan's criticism about identification being based on the country of the origins has been a cause for internal divisions within the communities, which I will address in the following subsection. It can thus be hypothesised that the political schism has been replaced by differences of opinion reflecting the country of origin in which

community members were born and raised. However, this cultural diversity never turned into a strict disagreement amongst the Armenians. It seems that cultural differences inevitably lead to diversity in the definition of Armenianness.

Even if there is a consensus that identity is constructed in an intersectional way, in a cultural context in which identities are intertwined with various affiliations, the narratives are the primary markers for most of the Armenians of the second generation involved in this research. Hrant, who is a Protestant, states that faith comes first for him before this Armenian identity. He also underlines the point that even though the majority of the Armenians are culturally Christians, they may not necessarily regard this as a primary identifier for their Armenianness. This reflects generally low levels of engagement in religion in the western world, mainly amongst the second and later generations. Rather, it appears that self-identification is rooted in surviving stories about Armenian ancestors. For this reason, based on my field observations, it can be argued that a sense of identification with Armenian roots is also significant for those who are not interested in community affairs, which may seem irrelevant to their American or Canadian life practices. Hrant explains that persecution narratives should not be limited to the deportations of 1915, but rather in the larger history of the Armenians, such narratives serve as a founding aspect of identity:

> Armenianness is kind of continuing that narrative of belonging to a people, a group of people that have experienced persecution not just in recent history, but throughout history with the Zoroastrianism persecution in 450. […]. To be Armenian for me means continuing that narrative and seeing my story connected to this larger story of the ethnic group.
>
> (2nd generation, New York City, male)

> I'd really like to learn about Armenian history all of the trials and tribulations that the Armenian people went through throughout history. It's not only the genocide, it's before and always, Armenians came from the ashes.
>
> (Avo, 2nd generation, Toronto, male)

The majority of Armenians of the second generation see "genocide identifier" as a negative identity marker for their Armenianness. That does not mean that persecution is not an insignificant element of the identity of the second, third and later generations. The 'Armenian Cause' is a vital part of their identity, yet they do not take it on only as an

existential duty to maintain their ethnic identity. It should be noted that this aspect of identity intensifies in times of crisis when it is considered that Armenians face extinction, such as in the conflict of Nagorno-Karabakh. Nevertheless, in their everyday life, they tend to bring the cultural elements of the identity to the forefront. Lena says that diasporic identity is intertwined with the survival of a nation, but it is not the one and only component of the Armenian identity:

> We survived and we're still here, but it's more than that. It's unfortunate that [for] some people like that is what defines us and like if you, you know, say to someone that I'm Armenian and they say: "Oh! What is that? Where is that?". The first thing that you normally say is the genocide and whatever, but we are so much more than that, I think it's sad that that is kind of what we say that defines us. But we also have a lot of history before that. You know, like, we were the first Christian nation.

<div align="right">(2<sup>nd</sup> generation, New York City, female)</div>

The boundedness of diasporic identity in the USA or Canada is not solely related to the persecution narratives. As one of the first-generation Toronto-Armenian underlines, the articulation of the identity by reference only to these narratives is seen as outdated by the young members of the diaspora in the USA. The critical standpoints of my second-generation respondents in New York City and Toronto towards the centrality of genocide in the articulation of the Armenianness support this argument. In addition, articulations of Armenianness which are only shaped around persecution narratives do not suit some of my second- and third-generation interviewees. A few third-generation Armenians from those born in the host countries stated that the expression of Armenianness in this way has occasionally caused them to distance themselves from their identity. I thus argue that there is a tendency for Armenians of the latest generations to highlight the positive aspects of being Armenian while defining their ethnic identities, rather than stressing the role of the victimised nation, even though the majority regularly attend the annual commemoration on the 24 April.

In a similar vein, the first-generation interviewee, Alin, emphasised that the current Armenian identity in the diaspora is more about "moving on", and building a new identity for Armenians, reflecting their success in the twenty-first century. In this new discourse of Armenianness, young Armenians find it more advantageous, precious to be

known as a nation for their achievements in chess championships, in intelligent technology, art and so on. Younger generations seem to prioritise the celebration of their successes. This move is very significant for diasporic identity; rather than confining themselves to the painful and traumatic aspects of their identity. Hence, Shushan argues that cultural heritage is downplayed by focusing on the genocide narratives:

> If I have kids, I don't want to teach them the bad stories, like this is what happened, we suffered. You have to suffer now because your grandfather suffered. That's how they kind of taught us in schools. I just became so sick of being considered like a victim. It's like the only thing our culture focused on, is about the genocide. […]. I want us to be proud of our culture, and heritage and show off.

(2nd generation, Toronto, female)

I must reiterate that such changes do not mean that persecution narratives are less important to their self-identification. However, the identities articulated by the generations who were born after the independence of Armenia, mostly centre around Armenia. Seda, a second-generation interviewee living in New York City, explains that she did not know how to answer the question about "what is an Armenian?" when she was a child. She states that as she has got older, she now describes the Armenians as a nation with its own country, a unique language and writing. Similarly, Talin, another second-generation interviewee asserts that Armenians were not so well known nearly fifteen or sixteen years ago in the USA. When she was in primary school, she would always explain the country that she identified with by telling the legend of Noah's Ark in which it landed on the mountain of Ararat and making "Armenia the cradle of all civilization" (Panossian 2006, p.51). Talin now feels responsible for changing the "brand" of the Armenians and underlines the significance of highlighting the cultural elements in Armenian heritage rather than simply referencing popular figures on social media:

> For me, when people ask me, where are you from? It's shedding the right positive light on Armenia and trying to express that to people because now it's not so much different from fifteen plus years ago when people didn't know Armenia. Now it's more; "Oh like the Kardashians?"[37] like mainstream people that stand

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[37] On the other hand, Kasbarian (2018, p.132) touches on the significance of the Kardashians' influence on popular media in the centenary year of the Armenian

out to them; that the only one person they know, they associate you. So now it's again, trying to break away from people's incorrect perception of Armenia, to kind of shed better light like "No, we're so much more than that". And here's all the beautiful things that the country makes by hand, our culture. It's not the Kardashians. I think that on an everyday level is what I feel, the challenge I face like you know, staying away from either the stigma that they might know of as an Armenian or explaining again still who we are.

(2nd generation, New York City, female)

Interpretations of the Armenianness in the second- and third-generation group are not ascriptive which bounds around a set of characteristics of the Armenian identity based on ancestry, proficiency in using language, being Christian. Ancestral customs are diluted and reconstructed in a hybrid form to encompass the cultural forms and daily practices of the country of residence, even though the common ancient history of the group is emphasised in the definitions. Besides, this fusion includes local cultural components relating to the country of origin. Though a definition of hyphenated identity is not articulated by some of the second and third generations, the imprints of the cultural forms of the countries from which their parents or ancestors emigrated can be traced in their everyday lives. For example, Talin, who came to New York City from Istanbul at the age of three, says that she feels caught in the middle while acknowledging that she has adopted Turkish culture to some degree. Talin explains this internal conflict with these words:

You know, I think it comes up in conversation especially for me, just saying to someone in passing; "Oh, […], I'm Armenian, but I was born in Turkey and that person might say, "Huh?! That's kind of weird". Because they'll know being an Armenian is Christian, but I was born in a Muslim country, they'll ask "why?" then, I very quickly, "well, you know, they don't get along. There's this history of a genocide…" It's complicated, but I still have a lot of Turkish cultural things that I hold onto and I eat the food I speak the language. It's hard to delineate them as it is.

(2nd generation, New York City, female)

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Genocide. Kasbarian (2018, p.132) states that they "drew the attention of millions who were previously uninformed about this issue" by visiting Armenia in April 2015 for the commemoration. Besides, they are known for their generous donations to the Armenia Fund. They are able to mobilise their fans on their social media accounts to contribute to Armenia, and they raise awareness about the plight of Syrian Armenians.

That the Armenians from Turkey speak Turkish sometimes becomes a matter of conflict in the group self-identification, since the Turkish language represents more than an external component for the boundaries of Armenian identity. I will discuss this hierarchical – in a sense – attitude towards Armenians from Turkey in the next subsection. It is safe to generalise that Christianity is closely intertwined with ethnic identity and Armenianness. Therefore, Christian identity is ascribed to Armenians by birth, even though individuals may claim that they are atheists, or do not feel belong to any church, or declare that they follow a faith other than Christianity. As previously noted, the participation rate in the church amongst the younger generations is very low, except for religious celebrations and festivals. However, my observations show that second- and third-generation Armenians in both cities studied state that Christianity is one the most important components of Armenian identity, and the majority claim that they would prefer to marry a Christian, even if this person was not an Armenian.[38] Although the language is seen as the main cultural definer for group identity, for North American metropolitans, to be able to speak Armenian is not key to the internal definition of being Armenian, especially for some native-born individuals whose identity criteria differ from their predecessors:

> I think for many, for like a generation, to be Armenian was speaking Armenian, and having that connection. But as especially being in this part of the country, you will lose the language first, in the second-generation, third, you've lost it all… […]. I think being Armenian is a deeper thing than just the language. Yes, the language is a very surface expression of what being Armenian is, because you can express yourself in a language; therefore, you can relate with that language, right? But I think the culture is very deeper than just a language. […]. I truly believe that being Armenian has to do with our Christian identity more than it does anything else. […]. I think the Armenian culture, the reason, it's different from more than other aspects of other areas in the Middle East, is because we have Christianity. So I think there's intertwined so much in our culture that you don't even realize you're doing it.

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[38] Sahakyan (2020, p.15) states that gender is not very important in choosing non-Armenians for their romantic relations by basing on the Armenian Diaspora Survey conducted in 2019 amongst diasporic communities in Argentina, Canada (Montreal), Lebanon and Romania.

(Lara, 2<sup>nd</sup> generation, New York City, female).

Chahinian and Bakalian (2016, p.53) have previously concluded that second- and third-generation Armenians perceive the Armenian language as a dead language; quoting Gulludjian's (2014, cited in Chahinian and Bakalian, 2016, p.53) argument that the "Armenian language is seen as not only "of the past, but for the past"". This is because the Armenian language is unable to keep up with the English language used in various dominant educational and cultural products. Second- and third-generation participants use Armenian while speaking about "past figures such as saints and heroes", but they prefer to speak in English when talking about "spirituality, theology or philosophy" (Chahinian and Bakalian 2016, p.54). Moreover, my observations suggest that second- and third-generation Armenians do not find that the Armenian language meets their everyday needs. Indeed, they speak English with each other, even if the first generation hopes that their children are familiar with the Armenian language. Therefore, the reason that Christianity comes to the forefront for some in the second- and third-generation respondents may be because they rarely speak the Armenian language outside their homes. Lara, a second-generation, New York Armenian, also comments that she considers religion to be a distinguishing element of Armenianness by referring to its role in maintaining a distinct identity for Armenians while they were living in the Middle East, alongside different cultures. In this context, religion is regarded as an internal feature defining the group who are exposed to "soft othering" by "state and social structures, political processes and religious-cultural conditions" in Middle Eastern countries. (Tchilingirian, 2018, p.2). Armenianness is defined as a common warm, welcoming and hospitable culture by my third-generation Armenian interviewees. Lara, too, identifies Armenianness with hospitality, but she sees this feature of the culture as deriving from Christianity.

Overall, the thoughts of the second and third and subsequent generations reflect a perception that Armenian identity can be sustained in its hybrid interpretations with the host culture. This does not mean that those who combine adherence to their host culture with elements of a more traditional Armenian identity are less Armenians. There is a grey area for them between perpetuating pure Armenian elements and being fully assimilated into the host culture. Nevertheless, it is also possible to encounter some

attempts to circumscribe the Armenian identity with bold identity markers in intergroup relations. The negotiations over the boundary lines indicate identity imaginations in which the grey area becomes more or less distinct, and in some cases disappear altogether. In the next section, I present some fixed binaries of the Armenian identity, which are mostly created by first-generation Armenians, and discuss how these binaries reflect intergroup relations where the diasporic identity finds a space to flourish.

## 5.3   The Boundaries of identity

Barth (1969, p.15) points out the existence of ethnic boundaries, which refers to social boundaries that define an ethnic group. Therefore, the interaction between the "fellows" entails internal and external definitions of a group that emerge through "a sharing of criteria" (Barth, 1969, p.15). In the territorially heterogeneous environment of the diaspora, cultural differences are generally a matter of discussion to determine the framework of Armenianness in the community, although it is hard to draw well-defined lines around Armenian diasporic identity. One reason for this is that "a clearly bounded group may yet be culturally diverse; conversely, sharing of cultural codes may well cut across group boundaries" (Eriksen, 2015, p.375). In some cases, diasporic identity is circumscribed by certain criteria in intergroup relations. These criteria set the grounds for a discussion between the community members concerning the "limitations on shared understandings" (Barth, 1969, p.15). This discussion also influences the sense of belonging of some of the sub-groups of the community in relation to the rest of the Armenian diaspora. I will explore the associated negotiations as they relate to two striking sub-groups of the Armenian community in the North American cities: the Armenians from Turkey, known as BolsaHays/Bolcetzi, and the Armenians from Armenia, known as Hayastantsis. The first reason for discussing these two sub-groups in this chapter is that their cultural codes, which directly derive from their geographical dispositions, are in opposition to some articulations of the Armenian diaspora in the USA and Canada. These are recurrent themes in the self-representation of some respondents when talking about the sub-groups in the community. The second reason for exploring different articulations of identity is to confirm that a diasporic community does not consist of homogenous, solid and static components. As noted by Valentine (2001,

p.136, cited in Mavroudi, 2007, p.471), "people within communities can create imagined homogenous spaces, in which there are conflicting identities and tensions, both within and between them". Therefore, in spite of the porous nature of the identity in question, there are two main elements to define differentiation between community members in my study, Armenian dialect and the country of origin, which emerge from social interaction, as Talai (1989, p.41) confirms in her study of Armenians in London.

Given the evident geographical and social differences in the background of individuals in the Armenian community, it is obvious that there are no objective cultural or behavioural patterns that define Armenianness in the diaspora. Yet, I will discuss tensions between community members regarding key criteria of Armenian ethnic and national belonging, which are evident in their social interaction. Firstly, I will highlight the experiences of the Bolsahays as part of the diaspora, considering how perceptions of their past and present experiences colour their interaction with the rest of the community. I will thus indicate how external definitions of Armenian group identity are shaped in the diaspora, often in ways that are linked to Turkish cultural traces, and Turks as figures of *Other* in relation to a politicised Armenian identity. By doing so, I will illustrate certain postulates of group identity, which are still felt by some community members, even if only slightly.

In the second part, I will present the insights of the participants about the Hayastantsis who have gradually become part of the Armenian community in the USA and Canada over the past two or three decades. The members of the western diaspora feel themselves to be somewhat disconnected from the Hayastantsis in the community, and also when they go to Armenia. Arguably, one of the main reasons for this disconnectedness is the Eastern Armenian dialect spoken by Hayastantsis. In the context of relations between Western and Eastern Armenians, one of the determinants of group identity does seem to be language, even though it is not widely spoken by younger generation Armenians. Language plays a crucial role here since its specific dialects are accompanied by a geography-specific culture, which could exert a distinctive influence on intra-community relations. Reinforcement to this feeling of disconnection, mainly evident in the views of Toronto-Armenians, results from the lower levels of involvement in the diasporic space exhibited by Hayastantsis, especially the immigrant generations. This

leads Western Armenians to perceive the Hayastantsis as external to the diaspora, because of their unfamiliarity with diaspora life. By discussing the comments of the Armenians about the Hayastantsis, I will reveal the existence of certain standards in performing Armenianness in the diaspora, which function as characteristics that define the boundaries of diasporic identity.

Finally, through the thoughts of community members in both Toronto and New York City, who primarily consist of western diaspora participants in my study, I will present discussions about how boundaries are drawn around the idea of "authentic" Armenianness and the idea of being a member of the diaspora. This relates to my overall conclusion that currently Armenian diasporic identity is performed in a grey area that has emerged between traditional and *symbolic* identities. This section indicates that the grey area becomes blurred through interactions within the community, which derive from *cultural complexity* within the group (Eriksen, 2015). Moreover, identity discussions that appeared in the blurred zone mostly pertain to first-generation Armenians, although some instances of discussion are also found amongst second-generation community members in the diaspora.

### 5.3.1 The *Other* of the identity: "Who is more Armenian?"

In this subsection, my main focus is the Turkish-speaking-Armenians who came from Turkey, after the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. The Armenian immigrants with Turkish passports greatly came to the USA after 1965. According to Bakalian (1994, p.12), almost 10,000 Armenians from Istanbul settled in Los Angeles between the mid-1960s and mid-1980s, in addition to a large number of Bolsahays who settled in the New York metropolitan area. Kaprielian-Churchill (2005, p.398) indicates that the number of Armenian immigrants from Turkey who came to Canada from 1946 to 1966 was 673. After 1982, a sizeable group of Kurdish-speaking Armenians came to Canada, after they had worked as guest workers in the Netherlands and when they were unable to return to Turkey for political reasons (Kaprielian-Churchill, 2005, p.398). In other words, Armenian immigrants, who originated in Turkey, came to Canada from different countries as well.

Some of the Turkish-speaking-Armenians who settled in North America after the Second World War used to live in small cities, towns and villages in Anatolia before emigrating to Istanbul. Since most of them were unable to access Armenian language schools in their birthplaces and they were able to speak the Armenian language only at home, they were deprived of any clear command of the language. Meanwhile, those who were Armenian speakers spoke a dialect that reflected the place of their birth and residence. Furthermore, the dominant and official position of the Turkish language in public spaces, especially after the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, set the ground for the Turkification process of the non-Turkish speakers living in the country. One of the government's key policies was to close Armenian schools in Anatolia during the early Republic era (Özdoğan et al., 2009, p.307)[39]. Tchilingirian (2016, p.126) thus notes that "– at least until recently – on the micro-cultural and micro-social level, "cultural differences" between Armenians and Turks are not defining markers of minority-majority interaction in Turkey. But on the macro and collective levels, language, religion, and cultural production especially, are elements that set the minority apart from the majority". In other words, the Armenian community in Turkey are unable to find a basis on which to sustain their collective rights in a nation-state milieu that promotes a homogenous national culture and identity, even though minority rights were secured by the state under the Treaty of Lausanne (1923). Consequently, as Yumul's study of the early 1990s (1992, cited in Özdoğan et al., 2009, p.307) clearly shows, 60% of Armenians in Istanbul were unable to speak Armenian, and those speaking the language were not fluent. The proportion of Armenian speakers was probably lower still amongst the small proportion of Armenians living in the hinterland of the country. The stigmatisation of those who speak a language other than Turkish in the public areas in Turkey led the Armenians to be careful about revealing their ethnic identities. Some of my respondents said that they did not speak Armenian even at home to get used to speaking Turkish more.

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[39] For further details on the information regarding the Turkification policies on the language in the early Republic era, see e.g. Cagaptay (2004), Aslan (2007), Üngör (2012), Szurek (2015).

A first-generation Bolsahay explained that while travelling to Turkey from Toronto, she would warn her children not to speak Armenian with her when they landed in Turkey. Therefore, one might find it reasonable that those people who had to hide their names, languages and religions, felt that there were omissions from the cultural aspect of their ethnicities when they encountered Armenians coming from other countries to the diaspora. According to the observations of some Bolsahays, this feeling caused a degree of alienation from the Armenian community, which led them to create their societies. Its most visible example is the Bolsahay Cultural Association of Toronto, which was established in 1988 by a group of Bolsahays who are chiefly from Istanbul, and which was registered in 1990 with the purpose of promoting solidarity between Armenians from Turkey and sustaining their culture with a series of lectures, meetings and balls. The leading figures in this establishment were part of the community of the Turkish-Armenian based Surp Khach (Holy Cross) church and its school (now closed). It can thus be argued that Armenians from Turkey created their own environment in which they did not feel the alienation that they frequently experienced when interacting with other Armenians, as was true in their encounters with Armenians from Middle Eastern countries.

Kaprielian-Churchill (2005, p.430) indicates that the Surp Khach school – one of three full-time day schools established in Toronto – was founded by the Bolsahays in 1978, and it remained active in association with their church until 2005. The other two day schools were subsequently established by the Armenian Relief Society in 1979 and the AGBU in 1985. Kaprielian-Churchill (2005, p.431) emphasises that even though all these schools "are open to all children, the ideas of the parent may differ and they may be reluctant to send their children to schools with different political viewpoints".

In addition to differences in cultural and political standpoints, speaking the Armenian language is the crucial factor that shapes the social environment in which Armenians engage with their wider community. The majority of Armenians from Turkey amongst my respondents recount experiences of being humiliated or criticised for being insufficiently Armenian by other Armenians, especially first-generation Armenians from the Middle East. The Armenian Community Center (*Agoump*/Club) in Toronto,

established and run by Dashnaks, has been central to debates over the Armenian language:

> I used to get upset at the Dashnaksagan Center when I used to go there and they [the Armenians there] used to say stuff. I used to say, I have cousins that want to come here, but they don't speak Armenian and they only speak Turkish so they're not welcome and they said they can't speak Turkish here. That's the only language they [his cousins] can communicate. It was my time. Now the Armenians there speak Turkish maybe. Most Armenians that are educated believe that knowing extra languages that much better for the person, although they might frown on Armenians that don't know Armenian but only in Turkish. […]. I think still today if you start speaking Turkish there you will be looked very evil and negative way like "What the hell are you doing?"
>
> (Avo, 2nd generation, Toronto, male)

Avo continues by asserting that "by no means, I do not think that speaking Turkish deteriorates your Armenian identity". The most interesting part of the reactions of first-generation Armenian speakers against Turkish-speaking Armenians is that the former group also occasionally speak Turkish with each other in their dialect, which they were taught by their grandparents who ended up in Lebanon or Syria after the deportation from Turkey. However, in general, the overt preference not to speak Turkish, despite the knowledge of the language, indicates a negative attitude towards Turkishness, which is established as the *Other* of Armenian identity. This stigma is echoed in words from one of my unofficial conversations in New York City: "I know the language of the enemy." In other respects, condemnation of Turkish speakers in the shared diasporic environment may be contingent on the country of origin of the speaker and factors which determine language use in particular contexts. In my unofficial conversations, chiefly with Bolsahays, this point was underlined. According to the viewpoint that several shared, Syrian or Lebanon Armenians (they referred to the Dashnaks, in particular) tolerate speaking Turkish by individuals who come from their own part of the world, for example, Bourj Hammoud in Lebanon, where Turkish is the usual daily language amongst Armenians.

Similar expressions reverberated through the interviews with some second-generation Bolsahays. Talin says that she has not experienced any derogatory comments from

Lebanese or Syrian Armenians in the community over being *pure* Armenian, but the same was not true of Armenians from Armenia:

> I have not come across any negative things in particular with the Middle Eastern [Armenians], but definitely Armenians from Armenia. I've felt that I wasn't pure Armenian enough or that I was almost I did a disservice to my heritage or my culture by… Because I speak Turkish, eat the food, sing one of the songs. They see it as disrespect. Like, "How could you be full Armenian if there's a part of you that lived in Turkey, was born in Turkey?", like "You almost naturally have that instilled in you also, so you can't be full Armenian". That's how they see it.
>
> (2nd generation, New York City, female).

From the viewpoint of some of my participants originating in Middle Eastern countries, speaking Turkish is not acceptable; a judgement which also applies to going to a Turkish restaurant, buying Turkish products, having a Turkish surname[40] or wearing the shirt of one of Turkish national football team:

> I am upset when I see some Armenians wearing football shirts of one of the national teams of Turkey. I do not want to see this flag [Turkish flag on the uniform] in our place.
>
> (Narek, 1st generation, Toronto, male).

Today, the level of bias against the Bolsahays is less than in the past, yet previous experiences may encourage some Bolsahays and their children to keep a psychological distance from engagement in the community centre led by the Dashnaks. Although different national sub-communities, including Bolsahays, are visible at some events hosted by Dashnaks-affiliated organisations in the Armenian Community Center of Toronto, the appearance of Bolsahays at the centre is occasion-specific and generally limited. Criticism from mainly Middle Eastern Armenians encourage Bolsahays to affiliate themselves with other political, cultural organisations and charities which are

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[40] The "-ian/-yan" ("եան/յան" in Armenian) suffix at the end of the surname is generally regarded as an indicator of being Armenian. However, with the Surname Law of 1934 as a part of Turkification policy conducted in the early Republic of Turkey, the Armenians who had lived in Turkey had to change their surnames by dropping the -ian suffix and changing it with "oğlu" which means "son of" (Bakalian, 1994, p.341; Türköz, 2018).

more tolerant of different upbringings and cultural affiliations. This bias may be renewed by continuing new arrivals who adhere to traditional markers of the identity.

The final major criticism against the Bolsahays in both the USA and Canada is about their limited participation in the commemoration of the 24 April. This criticism, which is usually articulated by first-generation Armenians from the Middle East, also contains a degree of empathy. There is a general understanding that the Bolsahays' non-attendance may reflect fears for their relatives still living in Turkey. Nevertheless, the second-generation Bolsahay participants tend to attend the event more than their parents.

Research conducted on Armenians in Turkey discovered that the Armenians feel emotionally trapped (Özdoğan et al., 2009, p.342). This feeling seemingly derives from Armenians in Turkey thinking that they are excluded by the state and society and that they are expected to prove their Armenianness by the diaspora because of their negative perceptions of Turkey. Therefore, the image of Turkish Armenians is reproduced in the diaspora through their relationship with Armenian immigrants from Turkey. As discussed in the previous section, in the eyes of the majority, Armenianness is no longer defined by supposedly objective, traditional and static criteria; the idea that anyone who feels Armenian is an Armenian is widely accepted amongst the diaspora members in my study. However, the data presented in this section demonstrate that in certain situations, group identity is still demarcated, and those who do not adhere to certain markers of identity may be excluded from the group. It should be reiterated, however, that this point mostly relates to first-generation Armenians whose cultural attitudes are shaped by their country of origin, and the intensity of the intergroup segregation has generally decreased.

Based on my field observations and findings from the interviews, I can state that there are three main reasons for the shift in society's attitude towards Turkish Armenians. First, the second-generation of Bolsahays prefer to speak English with each other, and more generally, when they become involved in community affairs. Second, the level of empathy increased towards Turkish Armenians living in Istanbul, and also in the diaspora, after the assassination in 2007 of Hrant Dink, an Armenian journalist and a leading figure in the Istanbul Armenian community. His funeral procession was joined by hundreds of thousands of people who marched with banners saying "We are all

Armenians; we are all Hrant Dink". Kasbarian (2016, p.215) describes this as "a turning point for Istanbul Armenians, and arguably for Turkish society as a whole". According to Türkmen-Dervişoğlu (2013, p.684), this solidarity between the Turkish and Armenian people in Turkey was astonishing for the diaspora, and for Armenians in Armenia, as much as for the Armenians and Turks in Turkey. Therefore, this created a rupture in the perspective towards the Bolsahays in the community. Finally, the third reason for the change in mentality is the decrease in the influence of the discourse and agenda of diaspora elites and traditional organisations amongst the subsequent generations in the west where multiple identities criss-cross each other, and whose ethnic identities are constructed on a basis that is more "affiliated" rather than "filiated" (Tölölyan, 2014).

### 5.3.2  A transnational group in the diaspora: Hayastantsis

My aim in this subsection is to explore perceptions evident amongst members of the western diaspora that Hayastantsis, who are part of Armenian society in North America, are not regarded as full members of the diasporic community in New York City, and especially in Toronto. Brubaker (2002, p.169) describes a group as "a mutually interacting, mutually recognizing, mutually oriented, effectively communicating, bounded collectivity with a sense of solidarity, corporate identity and capacity for concerted action". In this regard, Armenians from Armenia, who mostly prefer to settle in California (Der-Martirosian, 2008, p.130) and are now starting to extend into the third generations, are conceived as outside of the notion of the diaspora, as defined by some of the key determinants of the diasporic identity set out by Tölölyan (2014). Diasporic identity is a construction, and as Brubaker (2005, p.12) emphasises, we should consider the term diaspora as a "stance", "a claim" rather than a well-defined category. In this respect, one might argue that the Hayastantsis are positioned outside of the *stance* adopted by those Armenians who identify themselves as part of the diasporic community. Likewise, Tölölyan (2014) classified the Hayastantsis as "transnationals", since they are "not yet diasporic Armenians". According to some of my respondents, the engagement of Hayastantsis in the *local-diasporic fields* is limited compared to their own, many do participate to some degree. Evidence regarding the perceptions of interviewees from Middle Eastern countries, Turkey and Iran about the Hayastantsis

living in the diaspora emerged from the discussion of intergroup relations and their own sense of connection with Armenian culture in Armenia. By contrast, my Armenian respondents from Armenia did not stress any differences between themselves and the community, nor do they contrast their own position with members of the western diaspora.

Douglas and Bakalian (2009, pp.42-43) state that the increase in the number of Armenians from Armenia in the USA has affected intergroup relations as well as associations, institutions and schools in the diaspora, because of differences in Armenian language forms in Western and Eastern Armenian. Today, it is also noticeable that there are distinguishing differences in cultural practices, and mentality, in addition to language, between the diasporic Armenians and the Armenians from Armenia. However, I did not find any equivalent amongst the Hayastantsis of the organisations founded by Bolsahays to represent their way of thinking, dialect and cultural dispositions. Their participation in established cultural and philanthropic organisations appears relatively limited compared to first- and second-generation diaspora Armenians. Declining levels of church attendance are not, of course, specific to the Hayastantsis, but reflect the wider generational pattern (Bakalian, 1994, pp.104-105). The churches continue to serve as community centres where the interaction of co-ethnics appears. I could not find a significant amount of Hayastantsis involved in the activities which take place in the churches. Hayastantsis themselves account for only a small number of my interviewees. The discussion that follows therefore focuses chiefly on the perspectives of the diaspora Armenians regarding the Hayastantsis.

My exploration of the boundaries of diasporic identity began with the reaction of a second-generation New York-Armenian, Anna, to my question about how she thinks about her ethnic background. The answer was very clear-cut: "In terms of what type of Armenian you are asking?" She continued by saying that she was Western Armenian as reflected in the dialect that she speaks and that she did not identify with Eastern Armenians, in her words, "Armenia-Armenians".[41] Anna defined her Armenianness by

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[41] The participant did not refer to Eastern Armenian-speaking Iranian, Russian and Georgian Armenians.

reference to dialect, adding that although her mother was born in Armenia in the 1950s into a repatriated family from Lebanon, her mother and her family spoke the Western dialect of Armenian. Chahinian and Bakalian (2016, pp.42-43) anticipate that Eastern Armenian speakers will increase in the USA, as 43% of this ethnic group "are between the ages of 18 and 30", while 46% of those from the Middle East, who are Western speakers are aged over 60. Hence, it can be argued that the dominance of the Western dialect in the diaspora will gradually decline. My results suggest that linguistic differences do not result in any serious disagreements within the community, but they contribute to a real sense of disconnectedness:

> I have no problem navigating the different communities. I can speak Western Armenian and Persian Armenian natively. […]. Not for me, but for people who only speak one or the other, they don't feel as connected with the rest of the Armenians that they interact with. When Armenians from Armenia moved here […] they moved at 20-25 years old to university, and they had only ever spoken the dialect of Armenia which contains a lot of Russian words and the new grammar in Armenian, Armenian language was changed in the 1940s in Armenia and it wasn't changed in the diaspora. I know that's not an official dialect, but that's what I'm calling it here and they had a lot of trouble understanding our classmates who spoke Western Armenian.

(Louisin, 2nd generation, New York City, female)

According to the interviewee just quoted, who can speak both dialects, the Hayastantsis do not interact with the community when they first arrive in the country mainly because of linguistic differences. Many diaspora activists from different organisations that I talked to also stated that there is a degree of linguistic disconnection, but the two dialects exist side by side in the community. All regional sub-dialects within two linguistic forms include Turkish, Russian, Farsi, Arabic words, which, paradoxically, leads community members to complain about each other's use of language. Overall, it appears that there is not much serious debate in the community about which Armenian dialect is the most accurate. Hence, I have very few examples from my interviews of such reflections on the purity of the language. Toros, a first-generation Bolsahay living in New York City,

however, observes that the diaspora Armenians are the original Armenian speakers and that the Hayastantsis' dialect is very Russian influenced.[42]

Chahinian and Bakalian (2016, p.39) point out that growing secularism in the Armenian language, required to make biblical, classical Armenian closer to the "language of people", was a process that spanned the decades from the early eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century, which also saw an Armenian "cultural and political enlightenment" (see also Oshagan, 1997, cited in Chahinian and Bakalian, 2016, p.39). The Western dialect, which was spoken by the Ottoman Armenians, emerged as one of the two dialects in the nineteenth century, and "ultimately the dialect of Constantinople became the standard because the city was a major center of cultural production and home to the majority of Western Armenian intellectuals" (Chahinian and Bakalian, 2016, p.39). This point is reiterated by the Western Armenians in my research. The discussion over which dialect is more accurate is also found amongst London Armenians, between Eastern (mostly Iranian Armenians) and Western speakers (mostly Cypriot- and a minority of Beirut-Armenians), in Talai's work (1989, pp.43-44). Amongst my participants, the debate over dialect is generally not a fierce one and certainly does not imply contention over the authenticity of identity. Yet, another first-generation Bolsahay in New York, Mihran, thinks differently:

> Today, there is only Armenia that protects the Armenian language. 100-200 years from now, the prevailing dialect will be the Eastern, not the Western. Because it is the home of Etchmiadzin, it's the center of culture, whole Armenian history took place there. […]. It will keep the language from dying.

> (1st generation, New York City, male)

It should be noted that there is a distinction between claims that the accurate and standard version of the language is to be found in Armenia and assertions that Armenia is the only place where the language will be preserved. I can safely argue that most participants in

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[42] A second-generation Lebanese-Armenian in Toronto, Armen, expresses that Russian influence in the dialect in Armenia has become institutionalised in some cases, which is for example seen in some presentations in the conferences or meetings taking place in Armenia. He quotes that he heard the word of *Korruptsiya* for corruption in the formal meetings, he adds that "whereas we have a word in Armenian, which is pedoutyoun" (փսոռւթիւն in Western Armenian).

my research do not share the perception of "Soviet-Armenia as the standard-bearer of true Armenian culture" found amongst London-Armenians in Talai's work (1989, p.44). In particular, Western Armenians, who think that Soviet influence is still evident amongst Hayastantsis, feel a sense of disconnection from those who were raised in the independent Republic. Most of the second- and Armenian-speaking third-generation community members in both New York and Toronto stated that they also felt a degree of disconnection from the Hayastantsis when they visit Armenia. This feeling reflects two main issues; first, the difference in dialect, which includes Russian words, and the wider cultural imprints of the Soviet within the community in Armenia; and second, the fact that they were sometimes regarded as American or Canadian by local people, rather than as Armenian. These differences reappear in the interaction between Western Armenians and Hayastantsis, mainly amongst first-generation respondents. Moreover, most recent Armenian immigrants from Syria to Armenia are perceived to be close to diasporic Armenians:

> I found the ones who emigrated back to Hayastan from Syria close… They were closer to, I guess, me in the sense that you know, they spoke the same dialect as we do; their food is lots and more similar…

> (Neuvart, 3rd generation, Toronto, female)

In parallel with Neuvart's feelings of cultural affinity, another female, a second-generation respondent from Toronto, who is culturally Middle Eastern, stated that they, as Western speakers, feel closer to the culture in Armenia with the arrivals of Syrian Armenians in the last few years. She told that when she went to Armenia with her kids, they generally looked for the food that they are used to and they generally ate in a Syrian Armenian restaurant.

The familiarity with community life is another distinction between the diasporic group and Hayastantsis. Yeraz stresses that Hayastantsis are often unfamiliar with the diaspora culture:

> We have people that are coming from Armenia who are not even familiar with the diasporan life. Like, for them it's like you move to anywhere, to any country that you want a better life for yourself. It has become individualistic for them. They don't know community life, because they're not used to that; maybe that's why they prefer to keep away from the community. So, for them, it's basically –

it's like any other culture – you are not in your country, […] kind of basically moving away from all the activity which make you a community and you wanna have your own life, children and that stuff.

<div align="right">(1<sup>st</sup> generation, Toronto, female)</div>

Similarly, Maral, who is actively involved in community affairs within the scope of Dashnak cultural organisation and relief society, expresses that the mentality of diasporic Armenians is based on voluntariness, whereas recent arrivals from Armenia are unwilling to volunteer. Maral considers that this is because during Soviet times they were paid for everything and there was no independent voluntary sector. She states that in the diaspora way of thinking, even if the budget of Armenians was limited, especially when they first arrived, they tried to allocate money to spend on food at events or to support community projects. She perceives the Hayastantsis as different:

> They tend to look outside, to go outside. For us, we can't see how you could be an Armenian and look outside. When they come outside, they don't involve in the Armenian community. That's very seldom that they do that. There are Hayastantsis who participate in our community but very limited – few and far between. It's so interesting. I guess they don't feel a sense of belonging.

<div align="right">(1<sup>st</sup> generation, Toronto female)</div>

According to Sam, who is a second-generation, middle-aged Western speaker in Toronto, the first-generation Hayastantsis do not feel compelled to associate themselves with the Western Armenians, they do not feel that they are the same as the rest of the community. Daron, however, approached this issue from a different standpoint:

> They feel like... This is just a theory... that they feel like they know the culture. They know the things from back home. These people kind of like "We don't need to do those things" kind of thing, and they're not going to go to an Armenian restaurant, because Armenian restaurants here are influenced by Arabic. But again, it's not all of them.

<div align="right">(2<sup>nd</sup> generation, Toronto, male)</div>

> You have to understand them, you can't criticize them, they had never lived outside of the country. In the country itself, everyone is surrounded by Armenians. […]. There is no lack of Armenianness in their life. But for the diaspora that's what it is. They are clinging on to their Armenianness, just because they think that if they let go, they let the identity go. There is no need for them [Hayastantsis] to cling on to that. Whereas this part here there is. And you need to understand them in a sense that when they come here, they look at everything from a business aspect: "What can I do, what can I gain?" […].

> They're not used to the volunteering life either. The diasporans are used to, like what I do- I'm not getting paid. This is my volunteering thing, you know, giving my time and knowledge to make it better for our community. But for them, that's another aspect that is missing.

> (Yeraz, 1st generation, Toronto, female)

In the diaspora, Armenianness is regarded as an identity in danger of disappearing unless it is preserved by those who actively perform their ethnic identity. I cannot prove claims that the Hayastantsis prefer not to engage with the rest of the community. But this is certainly a common conviction amongst my respondents, some of whom find them rather arrogant:

> In terms of dealing with other Armenians, I think there's a little bit of arrogance, they are arrogant. But not all the time, some of them are very welcoming and all that, but I think some of them... […]. I feel like a lot of the time they're like - they stick to themselves mostly. I think there is always division in Armenian communities in multiple ways; different churches, different organizations, different dialects, a lot of them says "Oh, mine is right, mine is right", that's a common thing.

> (Daron, 2nd generation, Toronto, male)

Allegations of arrogance on the part of the Hayastantsis are reiterated by Markar, an Armenian from Istanbul living in Toronto. Markar states that when he goes to Armenia, he is criticised for not being Armenian enough by the locals, who accuse Western Armenians of limiting their interactions with Armenia to visits and donations.[43] He claims that the attitude of local Armenians towards Western Armenians is pejorative, and he adds that they use the word *akhpar* to describe Western Armenians in an insulting way. This is not, however, a pervasive belief amongst my respondents regarding the locals in Armenia. But it might be that similar attitudes, which are felt by Western Armenians, are transferred to the diasporic space with Hayastantsis' migration. Another divergence reflects different attitudes to patriotism and nationalism expressed by Hayastantsis and the western diaspora. According to Aras, who has lived in Toronto for thirty-eight years, the emotional ties of Hayastantsis to the homeland are not as essential

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[43] Markar also makes an interesting comment on his travel to Karabakh. According to Markar's observation, Karabakhtsis (Armenians from Karabakh) regard themselves as more Armenian, more nationalist and more patriotic than the locals in Armenia.

and central as those found amongst the diaspora. He states that their nationalism is also weaker than that found in the diaspora. Aras associates their weak sense of belonging with communism which, he argues, oppressed Armenian nationalist sentiments amongst those living under the Soviet regime. He continues with these words:

> I can understand their economic grievances and under what conditions they had to migrate here. But they do not have a sense of belonging to the homeland as much as we do. Whenever we question them about this issue, they reply as "if you love it very much, go to Armenia", and the discussion ends here.

<div align="right">(1<sup>st</sup> generation, Toronto, male)</div>

The overall argument of the Toronto community, including Eastern Armenian-speaking Iranians, is that the first-generation Hayastantsis do not become involved much in community affairs and that because of cultural differences including dialect, there is a disconnection between the diasporan Armenians and the Hayastantsis. However, many believe that the situation will change as the number of second- and subsequent generation Hayastantsis born in the host countries increases. For example, according to Daron, who is a second-generation Toronto-Armenian, the community is inter-mixed; some younger Hayastantsis are members of an Armenian dance group, even though their parents are not involved in such activities. He also adds that with the recent emigrations of Armenian families from Armenia in the last five years, their children want to play with other Armenian youngsters. Alin thus states that the disunity between sub-groups deriving from having two different dialects in the community has begun to disappear, and she identifies a new approach in the Armenian diasporic identity:

> The new identity is being shaped around using both dialects, mixing both dialects, like you can understand the Western and speak Eastern, you can speak Eastern, understand Western and vice versa. So, the new generation is more exposed to Western Armenian, the general-spoken generation is more exposed to the Eastern Armenian language, and Eastern Armenian is more exposed to Western Armenian. The gap was much bigger in the past. The gap is slowly, but steadily getting closer. And it's going to take a while. […]. [B]efore as I said, it was more destructive. We as organizations, as community leaders are trying to find avenues to make it more constructive, to use those two dialects to be constructive, to build and flourish our culture.

<div align="right">(1<sup>st</sup> generation, New York City, female)</div>

Although proximity to the diaspora culture has increased amongst successive generations of Armenians from Armenia and thus decreasing perceptions of disconnection, the enrolment of Armenian children from Armenia in the community Saturday schools is low. According to Yeraz, there are 136 students in the Eastern language division of the school in Toronto. She states that as a result, she knows more Armenians from Armenia, but the number of Eastern-speaking children from Armenia does not reflect the overall scale of migration from the homeland. Yeraz thinks that this is because parents do not prioritise sending their children to Armenian schools. Instead, they want them to be more engaged with the host culture as this promises a better life, career and social mobility in their place of settlement. As regards the Armenian day school in Toronto, according to one of the community members, approximately 80 students are children of the Hayastantsis from over 600 students in the school, where language instruction, grammar and curriculum elements are based on Western Armenian. On the other hand, Chahinian and Bakalian (2016, p.47) point out that "all Armenian language programs in the public school systems of the greater Los Angeles area offer instruction in Eastern Armenian only". Therefore, Chahinian and Bakalian (2016, p.47) consider that the supremacy of the Eastern dialect reflecting higher numbers of Eastern speakers who are Hayastantsis and Armenians from Iran in Los Angeles means that the Western dialect, formerly known as the "diaspora's language", is being relegated to the status of a "minority language".

This part shows how internal boundaries in the group are drawn. In the case of Hayastantsis, it appears that the infrequency of their involvement in community events and their limited willingness to devote time and energy voluntarily to the community are the key markers by which the majority of my respondents define the Hayastantsis' detachment from the diasporic identity. Unlike diasporic people, the Hayastantsis are seen to have left their country voluntarily, which implies a lesser degree of emotional attachment.

Overall, in this section, I have explored internal and external definitions of being Armenian and developed a commentary on different conceptions of how to perform Armenianness, which are taken to determine the membership of the diasporic group. I revealed that there is an internal schism – albeit slight – which is reflected in the

perspectives on the Bolsahays. Although they are seen as part of the diaspora, their social practices and emotional or more tangible ties with Turkey and Turkishness have been problematic for intergroup relations. This reflects the past influence of the western diaspora on the ways in which group identities have been defined. Brubaker (2002, pp.174-175) says that "ethnicity, race and nationhood exist only in and through our perceptions, interpretations, representations, categorizations and identifications". In a similar vein, diasporic identity is constructed through perceptions, interpretations, representations and so on. Even though the notion itself is tackled through a lens of "substantialist terms as an 'entity'" (Brubaker, 2005, p.10), it is appropriately solidified through a common *stance* that a group of people adopt (Brubaker, 2005, p.12). This identity, which is activated by classification and identification as being part of a group is "embodied in persons and embedded in institutionalized routines and practices" (Brubaker, 2002, p.175). Accordingly, there is a tendency amongst my respondents to argue that the Hayastantsis, in general terms, are external to the category of the diaspora, as most do not exhibit and perform diasporic identity in the *local-diasporic field*.

Divisions over dialects, broader culture and lifestyle have thus coloured intergroup relations for some time. There is, however, a common belief in the community, that they feel gradually more connected with the Hayastantsis over time, and that the difference is not as sharp as before. This might make this community into "a new category of the Armenian diaspora", as Tölölyan (2014, p.88) states. Based on my findings and field observations, there are three main reasons for this feeling of proximity amongst my respondents. First, it is evident that the second-generation Hayastantsi children and young adults are more involved in the community than their parents, thus strengthening their links with "diasporan culture". Second, younger Armenians from Armenia, who were born as citizens of the independent Republic, have had an upbringing that has more in common with other members of the diaspora than was the case during the Soviet era. Therefore, my participants feel more connected with them in terms of mentality. In addition, the arrival of Syrian Armenians in Armenia in recent years has influenced the mentality of the diasporic community regarding the culture of their homeland and the Hayastantsis. My respondents perceive this development as a new opportunity to increase their sense of belonging to the homeland and the community there because they

think that the culture of Armenia itself is now more infused with Western Armenian traits. Therefore, they feel a greater sense of connection with migrants arriving from Armenia over the past two or three years, and with local people when they go to Armenia. Finally, the third reason is that each new generation of Armenians from Armenia is more engaged with the host culture, a trend that is also evident amongst diasporic Armenians. Moreover, as Douglas and Bakalian (2009, p.43) foresee, with the interaction of US-born Armenians and the dominant culture of the host countries, the newcomers will likely be more American or Canadian, and the power of English is likely to sweep all other linguistic differences away.

Having discussed the boundaries of Armenianness and of diasporic identity, I will now address the features of the diasporic identity, which are shaped by encounters with the dominant culture of the host societies.

## 5.4   Clinging on to the roots: in-betweenness in the host country

In this section, I discuss how the Armenians in the diasporic space reflect their ethnic and American/Canadian identities. Meanwhile, I present their socio-economic conditions as a resident living in Canada and the USA, which influence their engagement in the host societies. Finally, by considering generational differences, I will discuss how diasporans find a middle course between Armenianness and American or Canadian lifestyles. This involves interviewees' reflections on American traditions of assimilation and the notion of the 'melting pot', in contrast to greater Canadian emphasis on multiculturalism and the metaphor of the 'mosaic'.

### 5.4.1   The socioeconomic status and geographic distributions of the Toronto and New York City Armenians

The lack of ethnic pockets specifically demarcated as an ethnic neighbourhood in the research fields, as found in some areas of Los Angeles, is a significant reason for community members in New York City and Toronto to engage with the dominant culture. Indeed, my respondents frequently contrasted their own experience with that of Armenians living in Los Angeles. They consider the latter more 'ethnic' and less

Americanised. Interviewees stressed the importance of the spatial concentration of the Armenians in the frequency and intensity of interaction with other community members. The prevalence of ethnic businesses and the existence of Armenian organisations and institutions in the area are also seen to encourage a high degree of internal communication within the Armenian community. Indeed, one of my second-generation participants from Toronto considered Armenians in Los Angeles to be a self-sustainable community, who do not need to be assimilated into other cultures to live. By contrast, in Toronto, some efforts must be made to be involved in the ethnic milieu, as is true of New York City. The two communities in the research sites are amongst the oldest in North America and they are similar in many respects, yet, another second-generation, middle-aged respondent from Toronto describes Toronto as a *granny smith* which is between New York City and Los Angeles. By this metaphor, the respondent meant that the Toronto community is intermediate between the Armenian communities in Los Angeles and New York City when it comes to expressions of identity. This reflects a belief that Armenians in Los Angeles manifest their ethnic identities more visibly than their counterparts in New York City. The communities in Toronto and New York City are seen as similar in a foundational way, however, my observations suggest, involvement in diasporic space is more visible amongst members of the Toronto community. It can be argued that ethnic organisations and businesses are relatively more concentrated in one area compared to New York City. The geographic concentration makes the involvement in the events and interaction within the community much easier. Therefore, it can be asserted that the Toronto Armenians are a more close-knit and community-orientated population.

Those who wish to participate in the diasporic space – that is the population from which my research sample is drawn – try to balance the retention of their culture against the challenges of busy city life, including consideration relating to occupations and careers, and to parental or familial responsibilities. As Gordon (1964, p.78) previously stated, cultural assimilation may be slow where "a minority group is spatially isolated and

segregated", whether by their own choice, or not.[44] It follows, given the pattern of Armenian settlement in New York City and Toronto, that their significant integration of the host culture is understandable.

The younger generations' career goals lead them to live in central places in which they create an environment shared with people from other ethnicities in the same environment. The overall level of educational achievement helps the participants to engage in the host country's culture. The standards of educational achievement, which form the basis for upward social mobility, are very high amongst my participants. A total of 73% have bachelor's degrees and 7% have master's degrees amongst my Toronto respondents.[45] There is a slight difference in educational achievement in bachelor's and postgraduate degrees between men and women amongst my interviewees in Toronto. More than 80% of the total number of men amongst the participants have at least a bachelor's degree. 90% of Armenian women participants from Toronto have at least a bachelor's degree. There are also a small number of respondents who have only a high school or elementary school degree amongst my participants in Toronto. They are mostly first-generation interviewees. The number of those who have a graduate degree is higher in the New York sample than the one in Toronto. More than 44 per cent[46] of the total participants have degree more than a bachelor's degree. A total of almost 50 per cent[47] have at least a bachelor's degree amongst the participants in the USA where all the female participants have a bachelor's degree. There are only two male respondents who have a high school diploma amongst all participants in the US sample.

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[44] This study does not comprehensively include discussions about the term assimilation and its updated debates. For a detailed discussion, see; Warner and Srole (1945); Gans (1979; 1992a; 1992b); Ingersoll Jr. (1997); Portes and Zhou (1993); Zhou, (1999); Portes and Rumbaut (2001); Waters and Jiménez (2005); Greenman and Xie (2008); Stepick and Dutton Stepick (2010); Xie and Greenman (2011); Rumbaut (2015); Drouhot and Nee (2019).

[45] The percentage has been rounded.

[46] The percentage has been rounded.

[47] The percentage has been rounded.

When the direct connection between educational attainment and market demands is considered, it is evident that my participants with a higher degree are more easily integrated into the labour force. They generally secure better-paid occupations in the host countries, which makes interaction with wider society much easier and reduces isolation within their ethnic group. It should be noted, however, that my respondents do not represent the entire Armenian population in North America. Across the population as a whole mean income, labour force presence, educational levels, fluency in English language, vocational skills vary, often as a reflection of differences in age and generation, gender, geographic background, and cultural beliefs (Douglas and Bakalian, 2009). Nevertheless, according to the United States Census Bureau's (2019a) 2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, the median household income in the USA is $65,712 and per capita income is $35,672, but the median household income of the USA's Armenian community is $77,110 (United States Census Bureau, 2019b) and the per capita income in the selected community data table is $45,695 (United States Census Bureau, 2019b).

Community members in Toronto and New York City, who continue their ethnic ties with their ethnic cognates and networks within the community in the host country, do not develop an "adversarial stance" towards mainstream society, as Portes and Zhou (1993, p.81) observe in the second-generation youth of some societies. New York City and Toronto are two metropolises where the residents are exposed to self-pressure to climb the career ladder in a competitive economic milieu. The majority of respondents are not deprived of access to the social and economic capital which will provide a basis for higher educational attainment. Moreover, all native-born respondents included in my study have parental support, reflected in aspirations for their children to gain a better education to be able to pursue better career options in their place of settlements.

That the average income of Armenians in the USA is higher than the national average income does not necessarily mean that they are fully assimilated. Brubaker (2001, p.541) indicates that a desire for socio-economic assimilation does not imply the desirability of complete acculturation, in other words, the desirability of what Gordon (1964, p.71) terms "identificational assimilation". However, the existence of social mobility ladders through educational attainment and economic success may pave the way to the full

integration of mainstream society. Likewise, many of my respondents have entry into "the social cliques, clubs, and institutions of the core society at the primary group level" or what Gordon (1964, p.80) dubs "structural assimilation". Yet, they have also other affiliations specifically pertaining to their ethnic group, which I will discuss in the next chapter. Diasporic Armenians in my study are thus in a phase of "structural assimilation", evident in their active attendance and full integration in the host-society dominated social networks. Yet they continue to articulate Armenianness as their primary identity.

A distinctive point in my research, which emerged from the answers of my respondents, is the differences in their conceptions of American and Canadian cultures. Armenians in Canada described Canadian culture as a *mosaic* in which every culture represented its own distinctiveness, as well as acknowledging its contribution to a larger Canadian identity. In Palmer's words (1976, p.488), the Canadian mosaic enables immigrants to sustain their ethnic identities and to present "their distinctiveness while functioning as part of the whole".[48] By contrast, Armenians in the USA tended to picture American culture as a *melting pot*. This notion, which derives from Israel Zangwill's play, *The Melting Pot*, (1908), describes the USA as a "crucible" in which all ethnic cultures melt and blend with each other to create a new, unified allegiance, which is American (Park and Burgess, [1921] 1969, p.734; Gordon, 1964, pp.120-121).[49] Although the term 'melting pot' was coined to promote assimilation, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries both the USA and Canada labelled some ethnic groups "unassimilable" and refused them entry as migrants (Kymlicka, 1995, p.14). Goksel (2018, pp.5-6) indicates that Canada, which adopted a "policy of "Anglo-conformity"" for its immigrants, in common with the USA and Australia until the 1960s, is today renowned for applying "multicultural policies as an integration strategy". It can thus be

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[48] Palmer (1976, p.490n3) notes that the term mosaic or multiculturalism does not accurately represent the Canadian social reality, yet, they are used to picture Canadian multi-ethnic society.

[49] The basis of the notion was also seen in a French-born American resident, writer and agriculturalist, J. Hector St. John Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* in 1782. (Crèvecoeur, [1782], 1925, pp.54-55, cited in Gordon, 1964, pp.115-116).

argued that the mosaic metaphor finds a space to flourish, given Canada's multicultural ethos. I observed that many Toronto-Armenians made this distinction when evaluating their Armenianness compared to their ethnic cognates in the USA. I will return to interviewees' comments on this distinction in subsequent parts of this section.

I now present the views of Armenians about their identities, which oscillate between Americanness/Canadianness and Armenianness, reflecting different conceptions of community belonging, which might be dubbed "overlapping multiplicities" (Glick-Schiller, 2009).

### 5.4.2 Redefinition of Armenianness in the Canadian and American contexts

*The first-generation participants*

First-generation's attachment to the host society varies depending on the place of settlement. The immigrant generations in Toronto emphasise their perceptions of a multicultural society, as noted above, in which they can represent both their ethnic provenance and new associations with English-Canadian culture. In addition to this image of the Canadian mosaic, well-established Armenian immigrants consider that the numerous Armenians from Syria and Lebanon, who have recently settled in Toronto and Montreal, have brought freshness to the community to rejuvenate diaspora organisations. Sona from Toronto, for example, speaks for many when she stresses the importance of new blood for the community:

> Canada is getting new immigrants from the Middle East. They are bringing their freshness with them. That freshness, that way of life with them and that's keeping identity alive and making the organizations stay a little longer. But I think America, except Los Angeles, is not getting these big numbers [immigrants] as this huge number that we're getting here; that affects to change the whole way of the existing Armenians there.

> (1st generation, Toronto, female)

US respondents, however, do not perceive recent migrants from Syria to have had an equivalent effect on the Armenian community in New York. All US respondents across the generations, and the majority of my interviewees in Canada, expressed pride in being part of the host country in which they live. Americanness or Canadianness is widely

regarded as a major source of pride, as expressed by Alin, a female interviewee from New York:

> In terms of the Armenian community for flourishing purposes, I want to say, the United States does a great job in terms of giving freedom to communities, to practice their language, having the freedom to come into this to have their own cultural center. I mean, basic like human rights kind of actions. […] [Y]ou're free to say whatever you want, you're free to protect your heritage and all that. […]. I think that's a huge thing that they give freedom to all cultures and religions.
>
> (1st generation, New York City, female)

On the other hand, this freedom is sometimes perceived as a risk such as a great degree of association with the host society. Action is thus required in defence of Armenianness. This is evident in the comments of Mihran, who lived in France for a while before settling in the USA, regarding his contrasting experienced in the two countries. Mihran states that he did not have any Armenian friends in France but by contrast, Armenians in the USA are much willing to meet with each other and to marry each other. However, he adds that the host country-specific conditions usually do not respond to these needs:

> Let me tell you something. You need to spend so much time with your people in your neighborhood to feel Armenian in America. You need to be hand in glove with them. Because this is a free country, it's a melting pot, everyone may lose their identities.
>
> (1st generation, New York City, male)

In the milieu of freedom, first-generation Armenian parents in both Canada and the USA often express concerns about their children marrying a non-Armenian which is seen as a major factor in the loss of identity. Their stance towards outside the community is not very rigid, but the majority express a preference that their children marry an Armenian. I also encountered several second-generation parents from each country who hope that their children marry an Armenian. The main reasons for this desire relate not just to the preservation of identity, also to the promotion of cultural affinity which is seen to make everyday communication easier for their children. However, Mary, who is active in the Apostolic church, acknowledges the signs of change and their impacts on the community:

> A lot of people will say they would hope they'd marry an Armenian, but I think it's changing. […] That's [the intermarriage] not even a discussion anymore

because you know, there are these intermarriages. Probably, most of our Sunday school family names are not Armenian anymore, because of so much intermarriage. So it's just a given, we are grateful when this mixed couple comes to the Armenian Church to plant the roots.

(3rd generation, New York City, female)

The structural assimilation phase, as Gordon (1964) describes, paves the way for immigrants to become fully assimilated into the host country. Intermarriage is one of the results of completing this phase. However, despite Mary's comments above, the majority of my respondents, who are otherwise well integrated into the social and cultural networks of the host society, and who have professional, white-collar jobs, still stated that they would prefer to marry an Armenian. Social interactions through "the clubs, cliques" and the like do not necessarily result in intermarriage for every ethnic group.

Fluency in the Armenian language is another significant point underlined by first-generation interviewees. There is evidently a marked decline in language use, particularly amongst the third- and fourth-generation respondents, as Bakalian (1994) proved with her survey conducted in 1986. First-generation participants emphasise that the first step in assimilation often relates to language use. I observed that the students of the ARS Armenian Day School in Toronto generally speak English with each other, along with Armenian. Yeraz states that she encountered the same situation in Saturday or Sunday schools, and she considers that reflects the fact that English is a common language for a geographically diverse group of children:

Because of the fact that if kids are coming from different families, Iran, Iraq and so on, English is their common language. Again different dialects, different levels… Some kids don't understand the dialect, English became the common language. There are also too many children from mixed marriages. And it is very difficult for the teacher to teach the language, it doesn't matter it's Western or Eastern.

(1st generation, Toronto, female)

The discussion above relates to children born into first-generation Armenian families in Canada. The Armenians, as is true for other ethnic groups in North American countries, are exposed to English in every corner of their lives. More notably, at home, they acquire ideas from mainstream culture through the overwhelming influence of media outlets that primarily broadcast in English. On the other hand, I observed that church parishioners,

mainly in Apostolic churches in Toronto, speak Armenian entirely. The majority of the Toronto community who are involved to some degree in the diasporic space, have at least a basic knowledge of spoken Armenian. The current Armenian school in Toronto is well developed and provides education from preschool and kindergarten to grade 12 and a range of extracurricular facilities. There was also another Armenian school in the same area, which recently closed. By contrast, the New York community has only one Armenian school. Consequently, some respondents who take part in community events report that they sent their children to another Armenian school in New Jersey. The school in New York provides education from nursery to grade 6, and the school in New Jersey has Armenian education from nursery to grade 8. The majority of the second-, third- and fourth-generation Armenians graduated from American-based public schools. When I asked them if they went to Armenian school, their first answer was generally "yes", by which they meant a church-sponsored school, typically a weekly Saturday School for Armenian language, culture and history. The majority of Armenians on the east coast do not have an opportunity to go to an Armenian day school. The first reason for this is the location of the schools. In metropolitan areas, the distance that pupils would have to travel is a consideration for many parents. The second reason is the limited financial means of first-generation parents who often struggle to make a new life in a new country. The last reason is the preference of the parents to send their children to American-based schools to prevent their children from being isolated from mainstream society. As an example, David, a fourth-generation respondent who grew up in Boston, said that his parents preferred to enrol him in public school instead of sending him to an Armenian school, as the public school system was seen as the best means to access a good job.

The difference in the fluency of the Armenian language between two communities in the USA and Canada mainly appears in the encounters with each other through Armenian programmes. AGBU's Camp Nubar organised in New York, for example, offers Armenian youngsters from different parts of the world, ranging in age from 8 to 15 years, Armenian language and culture, recreational facilities and opportunities to strengthen ties with their ethnic peers. Sona who went to New York with her son, who attended the camp, made the following observations regarding Armenian participants from the USA:

> They were further away from being like traditional, but still, they were there, and their issues were Armenian issues, so even though they looked much further away from the traditional Armenian identity, they still had that in their heart. For example, Camp Nubar, the fact that their parents sent them there means something, why not another camp? It's much more expensive than other camps. So the fact that they are still there, yes, they are more Americanized in their everyday ways, but they still like if you go there in the first year, and the next year, the third year or fourth year, you're attached. The parents are young. They're making the effort to send their kids to camp. It says something that they are trying to introduce them to the Armenian community in a way.

<div align="right">(1<sup>st</sup> generation, Toronto, female)</div>

As I discussed in the first section of this chapter, the general perception amongst native-born Armenians is that even though the language is central to the traditional Armenian identity, it is not the only way of being, feeling, thinking and acting as an Armenian. Tchilingirian (2018, pp.7-8) states that given the developments of the twenty-first century, the community should not continue to adhere to inflexible binaries when considering identity; adding that "what is "Armenian" in Armenian identity is what you *think* Armenian is" (italics in original).

The first-generation respondents in the two research sites, as might be expected, exhibit stronger traces of their ethnic provenances than subsequent generations do. However, this does not mean they do not interact with the host society, nor that they confine their everyday lives to their own ethnic cluster. They are well educated and the majority have a good command of English, equipping them for well-paid, white-collar jobs. However, I found that some relatively recent arrivals in Toronto, mainly from Syria and Lebanon, are less well able to express themselves in English. They usually prefer to socialise amongst themselves by drinking tea or coffee, playing backgammon and chatting in their mother tongue in the Armenian Community Center. Those who have been in America or Canada for longer are generally more actively engaged with the social and cultural life of their host countries. But it is not equally true that all first-generation interviewees feel fully at home in the host countries, especially in Toronto. Zaven, who works as an interpreter for courts in Canada, states that he does not fully adopt the host culture despite Canadian's multicultural milieu:

> Canada, Toronto... In many studies, international studies, it has been called the best country in the world. Toronto has been called one of the best cities in the

> world. Because it's like the American capitalist system here. When you think you want to take up a mega business, anything you want, you can do it, it has European civilization, social welfare and the class of people, civilized, like Europeans, so it's a mixture of two, it's a good country. But in the end, after living here for thirty-five years, there's no belonging. There's no feeling of belonging to Toronto, to Canada. I cannot call here home.

<div align="right">(Zaven, 1<sup>st</sup> generation, Toronto, male).</div>

The most prevalent comment made by first-generation Armenians in both countries is that the host countries offer them a significant realm of freedom, along with socio-cultural and economic opportunities. In the words of one New York respondent, "They have a chance to build something out of nothing". Even though most first-generation migrants arrived in the host country when they were already at working age when they compare the opportunities they have had those available in their country of origin, they feel grateful to the host countries. However, this gratitude does not necessarily lead to emotional attachment to the place of settlements. I frequently encountered a rhetorical question which interviewees asked themselves: "I wonder if I had not left my country?" Siroun, who left Armenia for Russia, then moved to the USA shared her feelings with these words:

> At some point, I blamed myself that I left the country. I left the country but other people were able to stay there and overcome that and survive. I felt like I betrayed my country […] but at that time I felt that if I'm not leaving I will lose my children. That's how I felt. Many times we didn't have food on the table in Russia and Armenia. I thought my children have to have an education and I always was studying with them despite these difficulties. Once I came to the United States, I was so happy like "Oh my God, I can find any club, I can do it, I can read, I'm going to go to work". […] This country made me feel like… I stood up on my feet and I felt that I was a human being, I could do stuff. I was being proud of myself and felt like I was somebody. Every morning I would wake up and said "God Bless America". However, my dream, my wish is to go back to Armenia. My attachment to Armenia is not only emotional. It's my land.

<div align="right">(1<sup>st</sup> generation, New York City, female)</div>

As previously mentioned the upward socioeconomic mobility of the immigrant generations, even though they are not all economic migrants, has affected their adaptation to the host country. Also, the social services provided by the countries in question, especially Canada, lead community members to associate themselves with Canadian or American identity as a common denominator. The lack of ethnic or racial

discrimination against my respondents further increased their sense of attachment to their places of settlement. The vast majority of respondents report that they had never experienced any discriminatory attitudes and that they feel very welcomed in both countries. Data from the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) confirms the low level of discrimination towards migrants in the host countries. Migrant Integration Policy Index (2019a; 2019b), however, suggests a slight difference in ranking for anti-discrimination policies between Canada and the USA. Canadian's anti-discrimination policy towards immigrants receives a 100% ranking, while the USA's ranking is 97 per cent. Yet, all these factors might not enough for first-generation Armenians to regard the host country and host culture as *home*. Their emotional attachment to their hosts remains secondary to their ties to the countries and cultures in which they were born and raised. Unsurprisingly, this attachment to the host country is stronger amongst the native-born generations. Nevertheless, for those who choose to engage in the diasporic community, it remains possible to strike a balance between Armenian identity and an identity shaped by mainstream society.

*The native-born participants*

In the first section of this chapter, I stated that the majority of my native-born respondents identify themselves using hyphenated identities, as Armenian-American or Armenian-Canadian. I also emphasised that this articulation of the dual identity does not appear to cause them any internal strife in their sense of belonging. Before elaborating on their experiences of living as Armenians in the host countries, it should be noted that the most salient generational difference in identity markers amongst the native-born diasporic Armenians relates to language fluency. The vast majority of the second-generation in both countries can speak Armenian, mostly using the Western dialect. The language is spoken at home and half of them are exposed to it as their grandparents only spoke with them in Armenian. Nevertheless, English is commonly used by second-generation participants in their conversations. I also observed that they sometimes mix up English and Armenian when talking to each other. Some of the respondents, whose parents are Turkish and Armenian speakers, are also familiar with the Turkish language and they are able to understand conversations, even though they are not fluent. Moreover, Turkish is sometimes used as a "secret language" by parents when they speak about issues that

they do not want their children to hear. These are instances in which the Turkish language appears as an element of the cultural identity of some second-generation Armenians. Language fluency is generally very much less amongst third- and fourth-generation participants in both countries. Other than two exceptional cases – one in Toronto and one in New York – all my interviewees of this type were English speakers. Some, however, had learned, and some of them were at the beginner or elementary-level Armenian. I observed a demand to learn the Armenian language amongst the third and fourth generations who are most involved in community affairs. In other respects, there are no notable differences in identity as expressed or performed by the third and fourth-generation Armenians. I will address the opinions of the native-born participants, taking the generation and country factors into consideration, about whether or not language is crucial in determining one's identity in the context of assimilation discussions, but first, I would like to present their perceptions regarding the host country in which they live.

The distinction between mosaic culture and the melting pot is also emphasised in their statements. Yervant, for example, considers that, unlike American culture, being Canadian confers the freedom to embrace one own ethnic heritage:

> People from Greece, Armenia, Iraq, India, doesn't matter, I think being Canadian is actually, part of that is being very open and very proud of being something else.

> (2nd generation, Toronto, male)

Armenianness thus comes to the forefront in the self-identification of the Canadian native-born generations. For example, Neuvart associates the prominence of her ethnic identity in her self-image with Canada's multicultural characteristics:

> The first thing I always say is I'm Armenian. In America, we consider more of a melting pot; in Canada, we all identify, I find most people identify themselves by their ethnic background. [...]. Canada in general is such a multicultural nation, yes, the US is multicultural too, but I find in the US, they try to hinder your culture. They want you to become American, they don't embrace people's different cultural backgrounds and nationalities, whereas, in Canada, we do like, you know, I mean, even in schools now, it's like they'll have Jewish holidays, the Jewish people can take their days off for their Jewish [customs] here in Canada. [...]. So, they're very supportive of whatever background you come from, whatever your nationalities. They always seem to support that and even promote that, so they really support the idea of multiculturalism.

(3ʳᵈ generation, Toronto, female)

In spite of the city's ethnic pluralism, Kasinitz et al. (2006, pp.104, 111, 118), in their New York City second-generation study, which includes second-generation members of six ethnic groups, found that the second-generation Caribbean and South American communities were particularly likely to keep their ethnic ties through transnational social structures. The authors (2006, pp.111, 118) suggest that those who are more exposed to ethnic organisations and the ethnic media are most likely to perform transnational practices. Although the majority of the native-born generations do not feel any conflict when defining themselves as hyphenated identities, in some cases, ethnic provenances assume particular importance in self-identification. Hence, Zepour, who is active in Dashnak-associated organisations, states that she feels less 'melted' in the wider culture and more engaged in the Armenian ethnic world. The ties sustained through diasporic or transnational organisations thus influence her thinking about her identity as an American-born Armenian:

> To be honest, if someone asks what my background is, I'll just say Armenian, but I'm not exactly sure why I don't say American-Armenian. But I just say I'm Armenian sometimes people questioned me and asked me, "What does that mean if you were born in America?" I say my ancestry is Armenian. That's my culture. That's my background. Yes, I'm American, but I don't usually say I'm American, which is strange, saying it out loud.

(2ⁿᵈ generation, New York City, female)

Ethnic organisational ties in the host country often appear to shape the self-image of native-born members of the community. However, I also asked my respondents how they would identify themselves if they were asked in a country other than their place of settlement or Armenia. Their answers reflect the respondents' self-representations in a milieu free from the cultural elements to which they are usually exposed. The majority of American- and Canadian-born Armenians, regardless of generation, answered this question by identifying themselves primarily with their host country. They thus replied that "I am from Canada/America"; if the conversation got deeper, however, many noted, "but I say that I am Armenian". Moreover, the answers are likely to vary depending on the country being visited and the person asking the question. For example, a second-generation respondent from Toronto stated that when he visited Greece with his friends,

they introduced themselves to local people as Armenians, reflecting the cultural proximity between the two ethnic groups. By contrast, the same respondent felt no need to express his identity in similar terms on a trip to Thailand. The respondents, mainly in second generations, however, state that they usually stress their ethnic identity when in their host country, especially when specifically asked about their ethnic background.

That a native-born Armenian prefers to speak English in their daily life can, as previously discussed, provoke criticism from first-generation migrants, especially new arrivals. Some second-generation Armenians are similarly frustrated about the rapid loss of language within the community. According to Louisin, who prioritises language as a marker of Armenian identity, the loss of language is the main reason for the assimilation of native-born generations. Louisin also compares the New York and Toronto communities who attended the concerts organised by diaspora organisations:

> In Toronto, the Dashnak concerts are all sold out by people who sing along to every word in these songs, in New York, me and a couple of my friends are the only ones who know all the words to the songs. In New York, you know, you'll have a lot of people with sings the songs but [they] do not understand what they say.

> (2nd generation, New York City, female)

Louisin considers assimilation to be very rapid in the USA. Indeed, she claims that migrants from Armenia to the USA cease speaking a word of Armenian within two years. She underlines that Americanness is a choice, like being Armenian:

> […]. [T]hey're choosing to be American. If they come up to me and tell me, "I'm American", no matter how bad the accent is, I think they're. I think it's so funny to feel like you assimilated so much when you still carry so much of your old culture, but whatever if they come up to me and say, "I feel I'm American", I will agree with them and say, "Yes, you are". Your culture is one of the few things that you get to choose. In my opinion, culture is about what you follow.

> (2nd generation, New York City, female)

Even though the language is identified as a primary protector of identity, the significance of cultural plurality is also underlined, allowing diasporic people to "exist" socially and financially in their host society. Moreover, some respondents argue that different cultures enrich Armenianness. Yervant, for example, who plans to teach his future children Armenian, does not consider it beneficial to send them to an Armenian-based

school. Instead, he prefers a public school education, as it exposes students to others from different backgrounds and cultures, preparing them for work in Canada's multicultural society:

> I think in terms of the real world like business or anything, there is no benefit of knowing Armenian other than to be able to converse with someone who's Armenian as well. To me, today if you are growing up and you want to learn as many languages as possible, so that way you're more attractive to employers or to conduct business or anything like that. You want to learn Cantonese Mandarin, you want to learn French in Canada before Armenian. The only reason why you learn Armenian is because of that heritage, that tradition those things that the past generations have consistently passed down from generation to generation.

<div align="right">(2nd generation, Toronto, male)</div>

Native-born diasporic Armenians thus continue to value fluency in their own language but perceive practical reasons to prioritise the English language. This pattern is well-established. Forty years ago, learning and speaking English was considered a way of escaping isolation. Tamar, a second-generation Armenian from Toronto, but born in Boston in the 1970s, shares the experiences of her parents when they first arrived in the USA. She recalls that her parents were told by their church community not to speak Armenian with their children and not to teach them Armenian. Tamar considers that her parents did not want to feel confined within the Armenian community, which had already existed for nearly eighty years so most members had lost their language; and they did not want their children to stick out at school. Nevertheless, Tamar, says that her parents did their best to teach her Armenian. In common with many of her native-born friends, she feels the same responsibility towards her children:

> At home, it was always Armenian, always all the time. But you know as they're getting older it's English [they speak English] but we always tell them "*Hayaren khose!*" ("Speak Armenian!" in English) I always say that all the time because there's no chance outside. […]. Many of the families that I grew up with in my church, Armenian Evangelical Church,[50] were not Armenian-speaking. Mostly

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[50] It is important to note that there is a bit of difference between the Apostolic Church and Evangelical Church in terms of preservation language and culture. Armenian Evangelical Church focuses on the religious aspect of the Armenian identity, and being Armenian is not necessarily equivalent to being Christian in this faith. Whereas, in Apostolic Churches, parishes are generally associate the Armenian identity with Christianity. I observed that the Armenian Evangelical Church community, more notably

English-speaking. So my generation where a lot of my friends didn't really know Armenian now putting their kids back into Armenian day schools, and there seems to be a resurgence. So there is a bit of realization that we have to make an effort to keep our language, to keep our culture.

(2nd generation, New York City, Toronto)

Second-generation parents, especially in Toronto, thus appear to make serious efforts to transfer their cultural heritage to their offspring. This is a primary function of Armenian day schools and weekly Saturday and Sunday schools. Those without political affiliations send their children to the ARS Armenian School in Toronto, which is the only remaining day school after the closure of the AGBU school. However, those who do not want their children raised in an ethnic bubble, prefer to enrol them in the Saturday schools run by the church with which they are affiliated. The "ethnic resurgence" that Tamar mentioned, might also be related to increased interest amongst those born post-Independence of Armenia and also the children of the post-1965 immigrants to the USA. These new arrivals perceive greater opportunities for visiting their homeland than was the case during the Soviet era. It appears that interaction with Armenia influences the engagement of native-born Armenians with transnational organisations and increases their interest in culture and language. David, a fourth-generation Armenian, recalls growing up in the Evangelical Church with many fellow Armenians and maintaining his Armenian identity by eating Armenian food, listening to Armenian music and having Armenian friends. He states that his day-to-day life is now more American, but his character and personality remain more Armenian, even though he is not fluent in the Armenian language. David adds that although he was raised within the ethnic culture, he is not interested in or engaged with the affairs and politics of the wider Armenian community affairs.

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in New York, are less fluent in the Armenian language. Bakalian (1994, p.36) notes that "Protestant Armenians are more likely to be assimilated at a faster pace than Apostolic Armenians". Jendian (2008, p.97) also found a positive correlation between generation and Protestant Armenians in the cultural and marital assimilation trends compared to Apostolic Armenians. Therefore, my observation is in accord with Bakalian's validated argument and Jendian's findings.

David amongst the respondents who feel less attached to Armenia. Indeed, his main interest is in Middle Eastern culture and he has tried to learn Arabic. This is not, however, a perspective common amongst other native-born participants. Most regard Armenia as their homeland, or at least they feel an emotional attachment to Armenia, even though few have plans to move and settle in the country. Adam, another fourth-generation Armenian, who feels more connected to the Western Armenian culture that shaped his ancestors' lifestyles, narratives, recollections, says that his interest in the culture increased when he was in college:

> As I got older, I think the culture shifted to where like it became cool to have some kind of ethnic background or something. That is more interesting.

> (4th generation, New York City, male)

It must be remembered that third- and fourth-generation diasporans make up only a minority of my respondents. The majority of those interviewed live in the USA. The community leaders I spoke to in New York City and the Greater Boston area are drawn more from the third- and fourth-generation participants. I also encountered many third- and fourth-generation Armenians who were attendees at different events hosted by the diaspora organisations. However, the discussion here does not constitute evidence of an ethnic revival amongst the third- and fourth-generation respondents in general. Exploring any such claim would require more developed and detailed research amongst the Armenian community at large.

A hotly debated question amongst the native-born generations and one of my research topics are whether individuals and groups maintain a balance between the identity embedded in the mainstream culture and their ethnic origins. Answers to this question do not really vary by place of settlement and generation. The majority of my participants in the USA and Canada think that it is possible to balance two main identities. They are proud of being American or Canadian and also Armenian. Shushan, who is a community activist, has come to acknowledge, as an adult, that economic and social rights provided by her country of settlement promise higher future living standards for herself and her future children. Yet this does not lead to estrangement from her ethnic community:

> When I was a teenager, I didn't like Canada and I wanted to be as Armenian as I could. Like moving to Armenia, working there, volunteering there, doing good

things, because, what I had, this culture, was so different from my Canadian friends' culture. So, I would listen to Armenian music, Armenian dance, in my spare time, when I was growing older, I started going to school, working here, living here, I kind of learned to balance both identities, cause it's important if I also want to integrate into Canada, to have Canadian friends and work in a professional environment, I still have to show familiarity with Canada as a culture and respect to Canada for my daily interactions with Canadians, I don't want to be seen as like an outsider. […]. On the other hand, if I had no connection, if I wasn't involved in the community, I would feel something is missing in my heart, you know I would feel a void, but my connections and my Armenian friends… It just makes me feel at home.

(2nd generation, Toronto, female)

To sum up, those who are native-born and involved in the diasporic spaces sustain their identities in multiple complexes. Such practices are common across the generations. For this segment of the community, the maintenance of ethnic ties is significant not because they fear losing part of their identity, but because they value keeping the narratives and recollections alive. Overall, Armenianness appears fluid in its definition, and different versions can be found in the expressions of identity amongst native-born generations. They may have been linguistically integrated into the host society and they may prefer to speak English with each other, but some attend church and the majority learn Armenian history, and some amongst the third- and fourth-generations have chosen to learn Armenian. The fact that certain characteristics of their identity have been subjected to assimilation does not imply that they are not Armenian or even that they are less Armenian. Rather, they continue to be, feel and think as Armenian. Finally, my research demonstrates that the native-born generations built their Armenian identities in ways that are condition-dependent, meaning that they perform their ethnic identities under the conditions that suit them. As Tölölyan (2014, p.87) argues, "the new, not-quite assimilated youth are not easily mobilized by older diasporic or homeland institutions: the young will join diasporic community efforts when it suits them, or avoid them". In the next chapter, I will discuss the motivations and conditions that encourage them to engage with the diasporic fields and interact with diasporic and homeland institutions and organisations.

## 5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I set out to explore diasporic Armenians' hybrid self-representations. I also examined the extent to which traditional markers of ethnic identity influence the self-representations of the Armenian participants. In the second section, I showed how the internal boundaries, which are demarcated by community members as a reflection of their geographical and cultural associations, shape definitions of Armenian identity. I also discussed definitions of identity from the perspective of intergroup relations, reflecting the "different experiences and visions of the (trans)nation and community that they represent" (Kasbarian 2015b, pp.251-252). Finally, I discussed the ways in which identity relates to both ethnic provenance and dominant cultures.

This chapter's first conclusion is that hybridisation of identity might keep eroding some traditional markers, but it creates an identity that is enduring because of its flexibility, allowing it to be fine-tuned to reflect individual preferences. Secondly, it appears that engagement with the host culture does not automatically dilute Armenianness in the eye of diasporic Armenians. Community members are gravitating towards a grey area in which they feel comfortable identifying themselves in hyphenated terms.

The third conclusion relates to debates on identity markers between old-timers and newcomers, and between people coming from different countries and cultures in the past. Such debates were partly a reflection of the political schism within the community during the Cold War. With the ending of the Cold War and the establishment of a newly independent Armenian state, this schism now seems irrelevant to younger Armenians. Debate on internal and external definitions of Armenian identity and diasporic identity has, however, assumed new forms with a greater emphasis on cultural differences.

Finally, it is clear that community members do not want to be seen as 'outsiders' in their host societies, nor do they want to confine themselves and their offspring to an 'ethnic bubble'. They are, therefore, proud to be American or Canadian, and also Armenian. As Brubaker (2005, p.12) puts it, they adopt a "stance" and become involved in "a category of practice" by investing their energy, time and resources in a diasporic activity. The independence of the Armenian state has further encouraged both engagement in transnational affairs, and the belief that it is possible to strike a balance between ethnic

Armenian culture and the dominant culture of the host country. In other words, respondents do not display ambiguity regarding the 'self' but instead *cohabit* multiple identities simultaneously.

This chapter has examined how the participants define their senses of belonging to the identity. I will now present their ways of preserving Armenian identity through their direct and indirect relations with diaspora organisations and communities' engagements in the "cross-border" and "in-border" fields that Chaloyan defines (2017).

# Chapter 6. Diasporic spaces in multicultural societies: Toronto and New York City

## 6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explored the articulations of the community members regarding their Armenian identity by considering their sense of belonging within the context of the multiple attachments and affiliations which they have in the host countries. I also discussed how these presentations are constructed through intergroup relations and used as attempts to reflect their position as members of a collective. This chapter will show how these articulations are revealed in diasporic spaces at the local and transnational levels, and how these spaces are constructed by organisations. These spaces, which are referred to as "social fields" which, as Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004, p.1010) point out, consist of "local, national, transnational and global" fields, and are interrelated. Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004, p.1010) make a distinction between "ways of being", which marks "the actual social relations and practices" of individuals in a social field, and "ways of belonging" which indicate a set of identifications or connections by which individuals consciously describe themselves with symbols and particular indications specific to a group. Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004, pp.1010-1011) add that these two may be combined in transnational social fields depending on the context. In other words, an individual can engage in a transnational activity such as having social contacts in their country of origin but does not necessarily have to feel a strong personal sense of attachment to this homeland. So, this chapter will scrutinise how this combination emerges and functions within the context of multiple belongings amongst community members.

The Armenian American Almanac (Vassilian, 1990) lists numerous political, educational, social, cultural, professional, religious and academic Armenian organisations and institutions in the USA and Canada; some of which are now inactive. Similarly, during my fieldwork, there were some discussions on how links between local communities and organisations were coordinated. I attended the second meeting of the

New York City Armenian Town Hall in which several professionals and representatives of the local Armenian organisations in New York City participated. In this meeting, the abundance of institutions in the region, many of which had few adherents in the wider Armenian community, was one of the main topics. A more recent almanac, the Armenian Yellow Pages and Almanac (2007) which I saw at the same meeting, represented the plurality of the Armenian organisations in North America. The practicalities of field research dictated that I select from this long list only those organisations which host community events to support the community through their affiliated organisations in New York City and Toronto. I subsequently interviewed representatives of my chosen organisations, together with members and participants at some of the events which they hosted.

This chapter comprises two sections. The first section explores the role of institutions and organisations in fostering a sense of group awareness amongst the ethnic community and the ways in which they enable community members to perform as actors of diasporic transnationalism (Tölölyan, 2000). In this, they attempt to construct a sense of 'home' for Armenians, which enhances their sense of belonging within "local-diasporic fields" (Chaloyan, 2017); but also transnational spaces to encourage particular participation forms which might be termed long-distance nationalism (Glick Schiller, 2004, pp.574-575). Interview material will be used to evaluate relations between individuals' self-representation as Armenian and collective expressions of Armenianness articulated by leading diaspora organisations.

The second section considers relations between these organisations and community members in the milieus in which the traditional political cleavages are significant, which is dwindling mainly in the east-coast, multicultural metropolises of North America. Sökefeld and Schwalgin (2000, p.4) state that a diasporic community needs to create a consciousness composed of "discursive and nondiscursive practices" which enables them to be a community. A reassessment of these practices is therefore required to see how the agents create this consciousness in which they construct their attachments to the community, how they imagine themselves as a part of the Armenian community in their place of residence, and why they choose to be engaged in the community through particular organisations and to evaluate the extent to which traditional organisations have

the power to be the main definers of Armenian identity in the community. It is important to discuss the perspectives of community members to measure the capacity of the determination of a particular diasporic consciousness produced by traditional organisations and its effects on the participants who are involved in diasporic spaces. In this way, I consider the place of relatively newborn organisations, which are mainly homeland-orientated, in the involvement of the community in Armenian affairs.

## 6.2 The construction of home away from 'home' and of networks for diaspora mobilisation

Staeheli and Nagel (2006, p.1601) present three components when discussing the topography of the concept of home. They firstly state that home is a material and affective *place*, and refers to physical, bounded connotations and also symbolic meanings. Then, they argue that home is a power-laden concept with internal and external boundaries. Finally, Staeheli and Nagel (2006, p.1601) identify "the sense of connectedness" by which people's attachments to plural homes "may overlap or be constituted at different scales". In other words, the idea of home is embedded in "a dwelling, a community, a region, a nation, and a culture".

With the expansion of the Armenian communities in the early twentieth century, the need emerged for different approaches to accommodate the diverse Armenian cohorts to make them feel part of the community. Changes in the internal dynamics in the communities in the late 1980s, the independence of Armenia, the Spitak earthquake and the devastating war which broke out in the Armenian-populated area in Nagorno-Karabakh all forced Armenian organisations to review their "diasporic discourse, philanthropy and politics" (Tölölyan, 2000, p.123). Over time, the Armenians more became a *diasporic transnation* than an ethnic community living as an *exilic nation* in the context of transnationalism and globalism, and this led the Armenian institutions in which the community members interact to review their agendas, discourses and performances around the feature of the diaspora, which became a "permanent phenomenon" for the Armenians in the host countries (Tölölyan, 2000, pp.107-108). Whilst the organisations and elites produce new discourses to improve relationships with the homeland, they also

create diasporic spaces where the participants redefine their feelings about the boundaries of their identity and their conceptions of home and homeland. Van Gorp and Smets (2015, pp.72-73) state that diaspora organisations are potential mediators which reify "largely virtual imagined communities" in concrete groups through their activities in particular spaces. This subsection reveals how traditional and new-generation institutions and organisations act as catalysts for diasporic engagements of community members as they turn "imagined communities" into more concrete communities.

*The Armenian Church*

Christianity has served as a tool to maintain the boundaries of Armenian identity, particularly for individuals living alongside Muslim communities (Kurkchiyan and Herzig, 2005, p.3). Panossian (2006, p.194) argues that the distinction between religious identity and secular nationalism is not crystal clear in the Armenian context, as the two components of national identity strengthen each other.[51] The Armenian Church, which Mirak (1983, p.236) describes as a "nationalist stronghold", plays a significant role in producing a consolidative discourse for the diverse Armenian community and for "both myth and the reality of a single nation" (Tölölyan, 2007b, pp.111-112).

The church today has material importance as much as symbolic in the construction of ethnic realms for Armenians. The Armenians who come to the country first interact with the church which provides humanitarian supports for recent immigrants to resettle in host countries. In addition, the church community helps newcomers to decrease their potential feelings of isolation in a foreign country. Over time, even though their engagement decreases for professional, personal or familial reasons or because they live in areas remote from a church, church services are principally attended by first-generation, relatively elderly Armenians in the diaspora. Regarding the degree of church

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[51] Panossian (2006, p.196) adds that secular perspectives did not necessarily hold a negative view of religion, but rather recognised the Church's role in shaping Armenian identity in a unique way and as a significant shield for the preservation of Armenian culture and unity; they instead challenged the clergy's conservative approach. On the other hand, Panossian (2006, p.198) shows examples of clergymen supporting the revolutionary Armenian nationalist movement. Hence, the religious and secular nationalism aspects of the identity were intertwined in the Armenian national discourse.

attendance of the overall community members to whom I talked, it can be stated that the majority of the second- and third-generation Armenians do not regularly attend churches in the research sites, although attendance is increased on religious holidays such as Christmas (which Armenians celebrate on 6 January) and Easter. Armenians also celebrate 25 December as Christmas in their country of residence. They might not go to church to celebrate it, but their traditional celebrations are influenced by the dominant culture, as Chaloyan (2017, p.188) observed in her study of the Armenians in Germany.

In Chapter 3, I described the division of the Armenian church into different congregations. The churches affiliated with the Catholicosate of Etchmiadzin in North America are composed of the Eastern and Western Dioceses of the Armenian Church of North America. Each diocese represents the Armenians in the eastern or the western states of the country. This affiliation can also be regarded as "transnational religious practices" by the individuals of a host country who are embodied in organisational structure (Levitt, 2004, p.5). Levitt and Glick-Schiller (2004, p.1010) state that the transnational ties of migrants can be embedded in their daily lives through social institutions such as religious groups which act as "transnational social fields". In that case, Armenians who are affiliated with Armenian Diocese Churches have indirect but formal ties with the Holy See of Etchmiadzin in Armenia. However, the transnational attachment of those who are affiliated with the Prelacy Church, whose centre, Holy See of Cilicia, is in Lebanon, is not towards Armenia. The Cilician churches hold the collective memory of the attachment to the historic Armenia where the Holy See of Cilicia was located until the early twentieth century. Today, the churches affiliated with the Holy See of Cilicia also have Eastern and Western Prelacy Churches in America. Tchilingirian (2019b, p.15) states that the majority of Armenians, as the majority of my participants,[52] are affiliated with Armenian Apostolic churches in the diaspora.

In Toronto, there are five main Armenian churches, two are Armenian Apostolic (one Diocese and one Prelacy), one is Armenian Catholic and two are Armenian Protestant

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[52] I had also participants who identified themselves as atheist or unaffiliated with any church. They formed a very small percentage of the community members whom I interviewed.

churches. One of the Protestant churches is located in Markham, Ontario, very close to community centres in Toronto. Some of the community members of the Evangelical church in Markham are therefore also composed of the Toronto community engaging in the community affairs in the region. Whereas in New York, there is one Armenian Evangelical church, three Armenian Diocese churches and two Armenian Prelacy churches located in Manhattan and Queens.

These churches and their sub-organisations create local and transnational spaces for the local communities to interact with each other and also with their co-ethnics from different diasporas and homelands. The churches also function as community centres, mainly in New York City, and host various events and activities such as dance shows, academic lectures/presentations, *kermes* (bazaar), luncheons (sometimes are hosted by the Ladies' Guild of the churches), wine and food tastings, movie screenings and church choir performances. There are also anniversary events such as the first independence of Armenia (1918), (mostly celebrated in the Dashnak-associated Prelacy churches) and the independence of the current Republic of Armenia. The churches also commemorate the national traumas of the 24 April, and some events are organised such as documentary screenings. For example, on the anniversary of the Spitak earthquake in Soviet Armenia which caused the deaths of more than 25,000 people in December 1988 and represents a rupture in the understanding of Armenia in the diasporic mind, a documentary showing the humanitarian aid for people affected by the earthquake was screened in one of the church halls in New York City, and poems for the homeland, *Hayastan*, were read. So the churches, as other Armenian ethnocultural spaces, form a transnational ground to revoke and reinforce emotional attachment to the homeland. The churches play this role not only through activities and philanthropic events on behalf of Armenia within the local area but also enable the local communities to physically interact with the homeland via their sub-organisations, which I will consider in the following sections. In addition, although not very often, trips are organised to Turkey by the church groups to visit the historical Armenia (the eastern cities of Turkey) where the Armenian heritage is strong. These Armenian pilgrimages, as Turan and Bakalian (2015, pp.173, 182) call them, are instrumental in preserving and reimagining Armenian identities by reconnecting the diaspora to their individual and collective histories regarding their existence in the

ancestral lands and reinforcing the attachment of the community to a place which is sensed, known and narrated by stories.[53]

In addition to representing the socio-cultural component of the identity and creating a transnational realm for the community, churches serve as sites of remembering with their interior and exterior architecture. As an example, sculptures and monuments in these ethnic realms refer to the collective memory of Armenians who were persecuted in history, dispersed over the world and survived in their residences, such as the "Revival" monument which was designed by Arto Tchakmakchian in 1984 which stands in the courtyard of the St. Mary Armenian Apostolic Church and Armenian Community Centre in Toronto:



**Figure 11** The 'Revival' monument in front of the St. Mary Armenian Apostolic Church in Toronto. (photographed by the author in 2019).

Armenian churches also play a significant role in sustaining the Armenian heritage, mainly the Armenian language. The invention of the Armenian alphabet by St. Mesrop

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[53] According to Turan and Bakalian (2015, p.184), the first known diaspora tour to Anatolia was organised in 1967 by the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), which was founded in 1955. Until recently, Armenians from North America went on these tours through different diaspora organisations. In order to avoid official narratives, the authors (2015, p.185) underline that experts in Armenian history joined the tour along with an experienced Armenian tour operator to guide tourists during the trip.

Mashtots in the fifth century is as sacred in the culture as religion itself. The invention is regarded as an "emblematic event" for Armenians (Zekiyan, 2005, p.51) in that it created a uniqueness to "be, feel and think as a Christian nation".[54] In addition, to glorify the uniqueness of the language, the churches take initiatives to maintain the linguistic identity for subsequent generations in the diaspora.



**Figure 12** The Armenian alphabet exhibited in the garden of the Armenian Catholic Church of Toronto. (photographed by the author in 2019).

The Saturday and Sunday Schools run by the churches, mostly from kindergarten to eighth grade and are important cultural vehicles, are preferred by parents to enrol their children. Most of the second-generation respondents, including the parents in both research sites, graduated from these schools. The percentage is higher in New York City because only a minority of the community members had graduated from Armenian day schools, which were very few in the research sites. In Toronto, half of the second-generation Armenians graduated from Armenian day schools, the other half stated that they went to Saturday schools. I can argue that my observations show that Saturday

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[54] Zekiyan (2005, p.51) states that the concept of 'nation' in this context is different from its meaning in modern western conceptualisation.

schools provide an intermediate space for Armenian parents who do not want their children to be alienated from both Armenian culture and American society.

Overall, Armenian churches have a significant role not only in the spiritual aspect of the community but also create a space for social encounters in local-based and transnational interactions in the diaspora and the homeland. Although the Sunday services do not regularly attract a significant proportion of the community, the church nevertheless continues to be one of the most important points of origin of Armenian identity. Although the younger generation does not associate religion with ethnic identity and is more tolerant of different religious orientations in the identity, religion is seen as a foundation in Armenianness, as evidenced by their marriage preferences. The majority of my participants lean towards marrying someone of the same religion as themselves.

*Armenian political activism*

Tölölyan (2000, p.118) states that the Armenian diaspora created "a more secular, linguistic, and national form of "unity"" with its economic, political, cultural and intellectual elites and institutions. Between 1923 and 1965, described by Tölölyan (2000, pp.119-120) as "the period of reconstruction" for the Armenian diaspora communities, identity largely depended on being "exilic", then a "discursive turn from exile to diaspora" followed in the second half of the 1960s. Sahakyan (2015, pp.26-27; 335-340) underlines that 1965 was "a turning point" for Armenian organisations and communities as it saw a growing "unity in the commemoration events of the fiftieth anniversary of the Armenian genocide". This helped to establish a new sense of solidarity between the political sects and the two Apostolic centres. Sahakyan (2015, p.340) also draws attention to the importance of the year, which is called an "annus mirabilis of recent Armenian history" by Tölölyan (2000, p.121) for creating a transnational discourse amongst the Armenian communities across the world as common ground for the tragedy to which they were exposed. Even so, the organisational separations and their articulations on the identity and belongings, mainly focusing on the notion of homeland, remained (Sahakyan, 2015, pp.26-27). Meanwhile, the Dashnaks were the key political figures in the diaspora between 1921 and 1988, and after independence, they maintained

their political activism in Armenia as well, even though it had some interruptions during the Ter-Petrossian government. (Tölölyan, 2007b, p.112; Dudwick, 1997, p.88).

I summarised the historical roots of the Armenian political parties in Chapter 3 and stated that these parties and their subsidiary organisations rejuvenated the national consciousness of Armenians in the diaspora who were struggling for existence, and today they, chiefly the ARF-Dashnaks with their far-reaching and influential organisational structure in the diaspora and their political existence, even though very insignificant, in Armenia, sustain their missions to keep the identity alive and take an active role in advocacy for the Armenians, mainly in Nagorno-Karabakh. The aforementioned political schism is largely seen as irrelevant to today's lives of the Armenian diaspora and a barrier to Armenians' desire to unite in a singular form held by the majority of my participants. However, some interviewees regard the political cleavage as an opportunity to keep Armenian identity vivid.

The development of transnational interactions between the diaspora and the homeland resulted in the traditional organisations and their sister organisations in the diaspora reforming their agendas to function in Armenia with several projects and programmes which increase the homeland attachment amongst the diasporic Armenians. There are also some alternative initiatives established by the community members in which the Armenians mobilise, such as new-generation, homeland-orientated organisations mainly for philanthropic purposes, which are also parts of long-distance nationalism.

Lobbying is the most salient example of transnationalism which is embodied in the "site of political engagement" (Vertovec, 1999, pp.453-454). Zarifian (2014, pp.506-507) states that the main difference between Armenian lobbies, ANCA and the Assembly was their approach to Soviet Armenia, but with Armenian independence, both of them reinforced their ties with the homeland and updated their discourses, programmes and projects which would contribute to the country and would attract the interest of Armenian youth in the diaspora towards Armenia. The Assembly does not reflect any party affiliation in contrast to its counterpart, ANCA. For example, one of the second-generation, female activists in the ANCA states that it is preferred that an Armenian should be a member of the ARF in order to be on the executive board of the organisation,

even though it is not obligatory. Whereas Ghevont, who is politically orientated in the Assembly, underlines its non-partisan position by stating that it conducts some activities in partnership with AGBU or ANCA:

> [W]e don't necessarily take sides. We have our own board. So we don't take direction from anybody other than the American-Armenian corporate structure. […]. We're non-partisan. So even in Armenia when their election [was held] we didn't interfere, we're not in that. We can't interfere in anything that's going on in Armenia. We help Armenia, we listen to their agenda, but we are not politically involved. Not at all.
>
> (3rd generation, Boston, male)

The organisation approaches the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in a similar vein; they do not directly interfere; their mission is more as a negotiator between the Armenians and Azeris in line with the words of the community leader from the Assembly. Similarly, a male, middle-aged activist Aris, who is politically active within the ARF, states that ANCA's existence in Armenia is limited to facilitating official governmental meetings or visits from the USA to Armenia; reflecting their main focus on bridge-building between Armenia and the USA. He also emphasises that they, as a diaspora organisation, aim to help people in Armenia, and Nagorno-Karabakh in different aspects, but also to create some outlets in Armenia and in the diaspora for the diasporic activism of the community in the host country who are involved in those activities.

It can be stated that these lobbies co-operate as long as there is common ground between them. The mobilisation to aid Armenia after the Spitak earthquake, for Nagorno-Karabakh at different times during the conflict, and to organise a joint commemoration of the 24 April anniversaries are some examples of this collaboration. Aris states that:

> [W]e have a very strong solid moral compass. Let's put it that way, like we stick to our ideology, we're consistent with our ideology. So when there's a commonality in our position with those groups, we will always work with them. Let's just say we all agree that we're going to work on a resolution to recognize the genocide, right? […]. We're going to commemorate, do a commemoration, we'll do that. The earthquake or Artsakh or whatever it is. If there's a common view then there's no problem with what the organization is. It's only when there's a disagreement over your approach or the position you're taking.
>
> (3rd generation, Boston, male)

As an example, one of the points of conflict regarding the past was the Turkish Armenian Reconciliation Commission which was established in 2001 with the help of the US Department of State and was intended to create a dialogue between Turks and Armenia based on track-two diplomacy or civil society (Gunter and Rochtus, 2010, p.161). The diplomatic representatives of both sides were founding members. The point which created disagreement was the attendance of one of the representatives from the Assembly, Van Z. Krikorian, as a founding member. The ANCA took a negative stance towards the Commission. The ARF was also against the protocols signed by Turkey and Armenia in 2009 as a result of negotiations to normalise relations.[55] Aris explains their reason for this:

> [I]n that case we couldn't find common ground because we were against that Commission. We felt that the Genocide, it's just raising, putting it as a question mark again, like it needs to be discussed again. We can't come so far both academically and [in terms of] scholarship, to retreat back to this position [which] was a position we were against. And we had problems with the protocols well, because of this historical commission that was cited in there. So again, we're against that. […]. If I had been part of that organization, I probably would have left at that time because I felt so strongly about it that was a mistake in that it was a wrong path. I don't know if history has shown that to be the case; both groups that involved themselves in that have tried to justify it since based on the events that transpired.

> (3rd generation, Boston, male)

Whereas the political activist from the Assembly, Ghevont, gives these motives for their participation:

> So [the] Armenian Assembly was hugely active in the Turkish Armenian reconciliation. […]. We started it. So we took a lot of criticism from the ARF and ANCA because we were trying to have dialogue, their position, their type is, there is no dialogue until recognition of the genocide. Our position is "Let's sit at the table and try to get both sides to agree that there...", you know, and when they get the ICTJ [International Center for Transitional Justice, a human rights

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[55] The protocols and former President Sargsyan were protested about by some parts of the Armenian diaspora thinking that concessions would be made by the Armenian government to Turkey over the Armenian Genocide and the Turkish-Armenia border. The Turkish side's preconditions on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict were in favour of Azerbaijan. Therefore, the protocols were suspended, and the process could not go any further for ratification in the parliaments of both countries (Phillips, 2012, pp.77-79).

organisation based in New York] the study that came out of TARC. ICTJ said there was a genocide.

(3rd generation, Boston, male)

Nevertheless, in general terms, as Gregg (2002, p.39) explains, the lobbies represent "a unified front", evident in groupings such as the bipartisan Armenian Caucus (Armenian Assembly of America, no date.a), which was founded in 1995 to sustain and reinforce the USA-Armenia relationship. The Caucus consists of Republican and Democratic members of Congress who pursue legislative objectives concerning the Armenian-Americans and the priorities of the Armenian lobbies for which they are working.

Gregg (2002, p.2) states that the rivalry within the Armenian-American community which is represented in the lobbying activities "had led to *hyper-mobilization* of this ethnic group's resources". However, that the political activism is conducted by multiple organisations does not mean rivalry nor does it refer to competition between the disagreements amongst the group. It can be accepted as a catalyst for mobilising the community, which is to say, as Gregg (2002, p.2) argues, that differences in the approaches of the organisations help to mobilise the community, to implement more projects and to provide more resources for Armenian political issues.

The most significant part of the political efforts of the Armenian lobbies is dedicated to solving the conflict between Armenians and Azeris in Nagorno-Karabakh. In addition to humanitarian and infrastructural aid to the Armenians living there, the political activism in the diaspora is against the conflict[56] which became a full-scale war in Nagorno-Karabakh. In the diaspora, political organisations in the USA share a similar standpoint[57] on taking part in the resolution of the conflict.

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[56] The flare-up outside the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, which started on 12 July 2020, escalated the tension over the region and turned into a full-scale war in the region in September 2020, which is thought to be the most serious conflict since the war in the region began in April 2016 (Efimova, 2020).

[57] The ANCA takes a legal initiative to "support Nagorno-Karabagh's right to self-determination and independence within secure borders"; to "secure direct U.S. aid to Nagorno-Karabagh"; to encourage Turkey and Azerbaijan to lift their blockades and adhere to international standards for human rights and humanitarian practices; to support

There have been several initiatives by Armenian lobbies for supporting the region since 1988. The lobbies gained remarkable success by making Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act[58] in Congress in 1992. The section restricted assistance to Azerbaijan.[59] Shain (1999, p.64) regards this ethnic influence on the US policy as vital for Armenia's survival. After several years of this law being in force, in 2001, the Senate passed a bill that allows "the President to waive the restriction of assistance for Azerbaijan if the President determines that it is in the national security interest of the United States to do so" (S. 1521- A bill to amend the FREEDOM Support Act to authorize the President to waive the restriction of assistance for Azerbaijan if the President determines that it is in the national security interest of the United States to do so, 2001). This section was lifted by President Bush and enabled potential US aid to Azerbaijan (Gregg, 2002, p.22). de Waal (2003, p.234) draws attention to the fact that the remaining Section being in force for several years was an indication of "how domestic politics could shape the foreign agenda of the United States".[60] However, Tölölyan (2007b, p.118) says that waiver of

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the OSCE [Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe] Minsk Group's efforts to resolve Artsakh-Azerbaijan status" (ANCA, no date.a; ANCA, no date.b). The Assembly similarly has a vision of "being in the forefront of a comprehensive, non-partisan, Diaspora-wide effort to irrevocably secure Armenia's and Artsakh's freedom, democracy and security". Moreover, the Assembly aims "to promote public and private civil society initiatives within Armenia and Artsakh, simultaneously maintaining the organization's policy of non-interference in those societies' internal affairs" (Armenian Assembly of America, no date.b). Both organisations aim to deepen the relations between the USA and Armenia/Karabakh.

[58] The Freedom Support Act aimed to support "freedom and open markets in the independent states of the former Soviet Union" (S. 2532-FREEDOM Support Act, 1992).

[59] In line with Section 907, "United States assistance under this or any other Act (other than assistance under title V of this Act) may not be provided to the Government of Azerbaijan until the President determines, and so reports to the Congress, that the Government of Azerbaijan is taking demonstrable steps to cease all blockades and other offensive uses of force against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh" (S. 2532-FREEDOM Support Act, 1992).

[60] The fact that US Ambassador to Azerbaijan, Matthew Bryza left his post can be another example of the lobbies' influence on the US foreign policy. Ambassador Bryza was appointed in 2010 and started to serve in 2011. He had to leave the post since the Senate did not confirm his nomination, which can be related to the Armenian lobby's

the Section did not curtail the lobbies' efforts on behalf of the region. For example, the diaspora's delegations continued to go to the region "sometimes accompanied by US Congressmen and French officials, without asking for Baku's permission". Therefore, the continuation of political activism by the diaspora line from the USA, according to Tölölyan (2007b, p.119) reinforced "the political will of Armenia and the NKR".[61]

In addition to the purpose of developing relations with the USA, Armenian lobbies intensively work for US state-level recognition of the Republic of Artsakh. Finally, as a community member engaged in the Assembly's lobbying activism states, both lobbies are rigorously working for de-mining projects. They also provide "rehabilitation services for infants, children, and adults with physical and cognitive disabilities" and "maternal health care, clean water" in Karabakh (Armenian Assembly of America, 2019, no pagination; ANCA, no date.c). Paul (2000, pp.37-38) concludes from the interviews with interest-group leaders that the "genocidal memory" of the 1915 event is significant in providing a collective movement in the Armenian-American community on behalf of Nagorno-Karabakh. My findings also confirmed the linkage between the traumatic narratives and the war in Nagorno-Karabakh in the remarks of the participants regarding their attachment to the region and also their perception of the conflict.

The last most important and common political activism of the diaspora on behalf of the homeland is boycotting Turkish products. This tactic particularly has improved and expanded against an ongoing blockade by Turkey against Armenia, which was imposed in 1993. Boycott campaigns are reiterated in the rallies, demonstrations and meetings by the organisations. Also, online platforms, mainly social media, are frequently used to

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effective opposition alleged that he had a pro-Azerbaijani bias and ties to Azerbaijani officials (Solash, 2011).

[61] The Assembly announced that the final version of the Fiscal Year 2021 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations bill renewed Section 907 by "including language requiring an assessment as to who initiated the war against Artsakh" and by recalling Section 907 (Armenian Assembly of America, 2021). It can be argued that due to the recent conflict, which started on 27 September 2020 and lasted for six weeks with great losses, especially on the Armenian side, Armenian lobbies' struggle for reinstating the Section was taken into consideration. However, President Biden has continued to waive Section 907 (Anon., 2021).

mobilise the diaspora communities to attend these protests. However, it is not possible to say whether the majority of my participants will pay attention to any boycott calls. Only a very small proportion of the participants state that they deliberately do not go to Turkish restaurants or buy Turkish products. It might be claimed that boycotting takes place at times of national crisis or when a war erupts. That could be one the examples for the argument of Levitt and Glick-Schiller (2004, p.1012) stating that "transnational practices ebb and flow in response to particular incidents or crises". However, a trip to Turkey is significantly out of question for the majority of the respondents, not only because they do not want to actively contribute to the Turkish economy by spending money there but also because they state that they do not feel comfortable in the country.[62]

Paul (2000, p.34) argues that the Armenian lobbying activities are successful in the mobilisation of the Armenians in the USA regardless of their size and dispersed status. All of the Armenians involved in this research support both lobbies' activities without distinction for advocating the Armenian Cause. The majority of my participants advocate for the policies and aims of lobbies and their subsidiary bodies' policies for the resolution of the 1915 events and their activism to support Nagorno-Karabakh to be internationally recognised as the Republic of Artsakh. However, some of my participants in New York City state that the lobbies are efficient grounds to represent Armenians as a unified form but they fail to satisfy the main expectation of the Armenians in the country for a redress of grievances, and in particular for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide on the federal level in the USA, although they create significant awareness of it. It should be noted that this belief is not prevalent in the community, but it is meaningful to see that the efficiency of political activism is measured by the achievement of recognition at the federal level.[63] Finally, regardless of political affiliations, all of the participants believe

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[62] Turan and Bakalian (2015, p.198) state that the number of Armenians going on diaspora tours to Turkey is very limited compared with the overall population in the diaspora and say that most Armenian communities still keep the hatred of Turks in their collective memory which shapes their identities. In particular, in my research, the participants did not exhibit strong anger towards the Turks, but towards the Turkish government.

[63] The House of Representatives of the United States Congress overwhelmingly agreed that the killing of Armenians during the First World War was considered as genocide in

that the only way to establish relations between Turkey and Armenia is the recognition by the Turkish government of the 1915 events as genocide. Although there is socio-cultural, geographic, dialectical and political diversity amongst the community members, there is consensus on this to take collective action. In this context, some of the participants who are engaged in the community within more non-Dashnak circles in both countries consider that a verbal recognition and apology from Turkey is more important than claiming the Armenian properties in Turkey as compensation. In this way, they find it more possible to build a healthy relationship between Turkish and Armenian societies.

In addition to political activism which fosters long-distance nationalism amongst community members, Armenians in the diaspora are mobilised around the shared identity through the non-political associations, even though some of them were established within the scope of political parties. These associations also serve as a platform for daily or weekly interactions of community members in activities of the organisations or day or Saturday/Sunday school attendance, as discussed above. Talai (1989, p.10) observed in the London community that Armenian associations are prolific and branch out with different aims and visions without sticking to a central structure while conducting their functions.

*Charitable, cultural and research organisations*

One of the most appealing organisations amongst the participants is an international organisation, AGBU. The great majority of participants in both research sites are regular/irregular attendees at events or programmes of the AGBU. Participation in some events does not require membership and is open to everyone. The participants are generally Armenians. AGBU has been prominent with its philanthropic and

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a 405:11 vote in October 2019 (H.Res.296 - Affirming the United States record on the Armenian Genocide, 2019; see also Office of the Clerk, United States House of Representatives, 2019). This resolution was unanimously passed by the Senate in December 2019. Finally, President Biden made a statement recognising the 1915 events as genocide on 24 April 2021, which was announced on the official website of the White House Briefing Room (2021). It can be examined whether the President's declaration is regarded as a success of lobbies by the Armenian diaspora because, during the fieldwork, the majority of my participants in both countries visualised a very bleak scenario regarding US policy on the recognition due to its strong relations with Turkey.

humanitarian support to Armenians across the world and educational facilities with its schools in different parts of the world where Armenians live. The organisation's cultural, artistic and scientific efforts for Armenians create a space where the community from any political/demographic orientation can be best suited.

In the aftermath of Armenia's independence, the organisation, like many Armenian organisations, started to promote educational and cultural affairs in addition to providing significant humanitarian support to Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh for the diaspora and also the locals in the homeland, and it established partnerships to do this. One of the most prominent initiatives of the organisations was the establishment of the American University of Armenia in Yerevan in 1991 with the help and agreement of the AGBU and the Soviet Armenia government and academic support from the University of California. Today, the institution works in collaboration with AGBU in several fields. For example, AGBU jointly initiated a Continuing Education Program via the University's extension in Nagorno-Karabakh to revitalise the labour force in the region in 2013 (AGBU, no date.a). According to one of the first-generation Armenian activists from AGBU's Toronto chapter, the organisation helps farmers in the region by giving them land to plant to earn their living.

AGBU functions as a comprehensive mission to bridge between diasporans and the homeland with its creative and updated programmes for each age group amongst the diasporans. For example, the AGBU's Discover Armenia programme offers young Armenians (aged 15-18) an historical trip to the homeland which includes engaging them in community services, such as visiting orphanages and helping to build houses for families in need (Discover Armenia, no date). The AGBU-affiliated TUMO Center for Creative Technologies provides free after-school education to children aged 12-18 in Yerevan, Gyumri, Dilijan and Stepanakert.

Out of numerous programmes of AGBU (it is impossible to detail them all here), one particular global initiative is worth mentioning: the empowerment of women in Armenia. During my fieldwork in Toronto, one-hour spin classes were organised by AGBU to raise funds for this initiative in collaboration between AGBU and other countries such as France and the USA. They cycled to raise money through an online platform where

they shared their fundraising activities and called for donations, and one Toronto participant said that they had raised 3,500 Canadian dollars. The 'EmpowerHer' initiative not only aims to enable women in Armenia to have financial and social independence but also undertakes preventive roles against domestic violence (AGBU, no date.b). Specifically, a transnational women's organisation established in 1990 in Boston deserves mention here, the Armenian International Women's Association. The organisation was founded with the aspiration of giving Armenian women visibility in different Armenian diasporas and in the homeland by empowering them with programmes, scholarships and projects, sometimes in cooperation with other institutions in the diaspora and Armenia. The organisation also specifically runs projects against domestic violence.

One interesting observation that I made during the fieldwork was that AGBU was more active in New York City than in Toronto. It was established in Toronto in 1924 but was not active until the mid-1930s (Kaprialian-Churchill, 2005, p.440). The Toronto chapter still conducts many activities, but in terms of size and expansion, it has dwindled in recent years compared with another community centre, the Armenian Community Center of Toronto. As I emphasised in the previous sections, the most distinctive point of the Toronto community compared with that in New York City is that community centres are providing visible local-diasporic fields which enable the interaction of group members. In New York City, this function is generally undertaken by the halls of the Armenian churches, which operate as centres for national and cultural awareness, with their supplementary humanitarian bodies, Saturday/Sunday schools, choirs, auxiliary institutions serving social and cultural services or research institutes and libraries. Moreover, the places are hired for specific events sponsored by organisations such as AGBU and the Armenian Network of America of the Greater New York Region (established in 1984), which provides a forum in which the Armenians in the region interact with each other through various community activities, articulate their needs as a community and exchange ideas.

By contrast, in Toronto, community centres form an ethnic complex, which includes the church, a day school, spaces for recreational activities and halls for meetings, lectures, galas and dinners. This structure can be seen in the Armenian Church of Holy Martyrs

in Bayside (NYC) with its school, but in general, community events mostly take place in other venues, except for church halls as insular facilities. In Toronto, my respondents stated that the AGBU decided to downsize and change its location by moving to an open office in the city centre, which includes private offices and an area for events and presentations. The Toronto community, in general, thinks that this decision reflects a greater focus by the AGBU on Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, rather than the diaspora. Moreover, according to the community members, mainly those engaged in the community affairs within the scope of the AGBU, the closure of the AGBU day school in Toronto reflected falling enrolment and the high costs of maintaining the Toronto chapter's premises. Ani gives the following explanation:

> The parents' justification was that "it's far". It's the location. It was just "too East" they were saying. Armenians used to live in Scarborough, but then they moved to North York, Richmond Hill, so this was, kind of, it's not on their way. […]. They changed their settlements when they earned money. So, this was kind of far for them. Especially in the winter. They have to drive, so the enrolment was, you know, every year it was becoming less and less, which is not healthy for the kids, you know, two kids in one classroom. […]. They [the parents] find the location of the ARS day school is better. I don't know…

(Toronto, 1st generation, female)

Kasbarian (2015b, p.259) states that when the Armenian Melkonian Educational Institute, an historical and precious boarding school in Cyprus, closed in 2005, the Armenian community in Cyprus mobilised to gain transnational support, in addition to the state support, and succeeded in gaining the support of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages to put pressure on the AGBU which was responsible for the school. However, the AGBU, which considered selling the school land to release funds for educational activities in Armenia, could not be convinced (Kuyumciyan, 2016). The closure of the AGBU school in Toronto in 2012 did not mobilise the local community. It created disappointment. Undoubtedly, the history of the school is not as symbolic and venerable as the Melkonian Institute which had a more than 90-year past, but its closure nevertheless was disappointing for the local community.

AGBU-Toronto supports the community with its local and transnational programmes. According to the abovementioned female activist from AGBU-Toronto, nearly 300 registered participants attend its sports activities and she emphasised that there is no need

to be a member to participate in all activities, so for popular events, the number of attendees could be as high as 400. The organisation in Toronto also offers language classes for community members who would like to improve their Armenian language, in collaboration with the Armenian Virtual College which was founded by the AGBU in 2004. According to a first-generation, male member of the community who attended this programme, it was also possible to see non-Armenians there who wanted to learn the language for specific reasons.

The AGBU New York is a larger-scale organisation, reflecting its position as a headquarters. The main office is located in Manhattan and runs several programmes and schools for the Armenians in New York City and communities in other states in the USA, mainly in California. It encourages Armenian heritage and connection amongst Armenian young people through several programmes such as the overnight Camp Nubar programme organised in New York, which promotes ethnic ties between Armenian campers aged 8-15 from all over the world. A fourth-generation, female community member, Lerna, from the AGBU in New York City states that the organisers regard the scale of attendance at events as satisfactory, and adds that especially Young Professional Armenian events, which are attended by the Armenians aged 22-40 (AGBU YP/Young Professionals, no date) and are organised in various countries including Armenia, are particularly attractive to the younger community members. They also raise funds for AGBU's various programmes during these events (AGBU FOCUS, no date). Although she could not give an exact number of attendees, she said that the internship programmes run in several cities also appeal to young Armenians.

AGBU associates in different cities are in the collaboration. For example, YPs, who host different activities from happy hours to professional development events in Boston and New York, build partnerships to promote professional growth and build the Armenian community. While conducting my fieldwork, I frequently came across a conviction articulated by some community members engaging in the ARS that the women in the community traditionally used to join relief societies and charities, whilst the men used to join political platforms, even though, according to an activist from ANCA, this trend has changed. When I asked Lerna about the gender balance amongst the people working in the AGBU, she stated that there are more women than men and added that:

> I don't think that's strategic in any way. I think that's just the way, I think, which maybe has to do with more Armenian women having this sense of "Oh, I want to help..." I don't know but yeah, there are definitely more women in this office and it's actually, it's really refreshing. It's really nice to see [it] for me.
>
> (New York, 4th generation, female)

Finally, non-Armenians are also able to work in the AGBU provided that they have an understanding of the Armenian community and are professionally qualified. It should be noted that to be hired by the AGBU as an Armenian does not require command of the Armenian language. Having a sense of being Armenian and a desire to give back to the community is initially considered sufficient.

In the Toronto community, there is an agreement that ARF-affiliated organisations function more efficiently than another community centre that is linked to the AGBU. Toronto hosts a well-structured Armenian Community Centre which includes ARF-affiliated organisations; a humanitarian society, scout group, cultural organisation, youth and junior organisations, a senior organisation, the school, the youth centre, the church, ARF-related newspapers and ARF's political institution, the Toronto chapter of the Armenian National Committee. As I clearly observed in Toronto, any event organised by any organisation/institution within the scope of the ARF has a significant number of attendees. Although different events have different levels of participation, most of the volunteers and the members of the organisation which hosts the events participate regularly with their families and friends.

ARS, as previously mentioned, is the humanitarian charity of the ARF and it is very active in both research sites. Amongst the humanitarian initiatives, the most recent projects are for the Syrian Armenian community. Such initiatives are particularly evident in Toronto, reflecting Canadian openness to Syrian refugees. The ARS in Toronto, in association with sibling ARF organisations, made strong efforts to fund the resettlement of Armenian refugees, who numbered about 2,500 by 2015 and continue to increase.[64] In addition to ARS, AGBU and Armenian cultural organisations, such as the Hunchaks'

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[64] According to Black (2015), the applications of 2,500 Armenian Syrians had been filed with the help of the Armenian Community Center between 2012 and 2015.

Nor Serount in Toronto, support Armenian refugees to adapt to the Canadian environment such as by helping them to overcome the language barrier, supporting them with after-school activities for their children, and finding jobs. The most salient impetus behind these humanitarian efforts, which is frequently articulated by the community members, is that the Armenians directly link the Syrian war and its concomitant refugee crisis to their traumatic past. The engagement of the Syrian-Armenians in the community with the old settlers' support, as Sona states, rejuvenate the community with the new blood they bring in, as do all newcomers to the diaspora.

Through conducting programmes and projects, ARS chapters in different countries collaborate with each other. According to a female, second-generation Armenian activist from ARS in Boston, Mariam, there is a member from Canada is on the board of directors of the ARS. Moreover, the two Armenian charities have worked together on many projects and jointly organised many events. Finally, according to Mariam, ARS has 15,000 members worldwide, although the numbers fluctuate in different cities and countries.

Finally, besides AGBU and traditional cultural organisations such as Nor Serount and Hamazkayin, the relatively new Barev Centre with its cultural, educational, social and youth groups acts as a cultural centre at Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Toronto on the same campus as AGBU-Toronto, and these are very appealing to Armenians in the city from each generation.

Monetary contributions to the homeland are one of the most visible transnational engagements of the community. The majority of the organisations have a remittance policy for donations for the homeland. However, as a first and large-scale, mission-specific transnational post-independence state attempt (Adriaans, 2019, p.73), the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund was established in 1992 under a decree of the first president of the Republic of Armenia, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, and serves as a pan-Armenian network to provide humanitarian support to mostly[65] Armenia and Nagorno-

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[65] The organisation implemented a project in Georgia by restructuring an Armenian church in Tbilisi in 2006-2007 (Hayastan All-Armenian Fund, no date.a).

Karabakh in social, cultural, educational, agricultural, infrastructural issues and healthcare as much as Armenian communities in the world. The organisation as a parent organisation conducts comprehensive projects to reproduce the sense of belonging to a unified homeland (Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh) with its partner organisations in different countries. The Fund's affiliated organisations annually set up large-scale, transnational fundraising events such as a worldwide Telethon in the USA and Phonethon in Europe, and annual banquets as in the case of Hayastan Foundation Toronto, and to start or complete projects with the collected donations. The Armenia Fund, an affiliated organisation in the USA has broadcast a 12-hour event from California on Thanksgiving Day every year since 1997 (Adriaans, 2019, pp.69, 71). Adriaans (2019, p.71) states that there are preparations for this in some Armenian elementary and high schools in Los Angeles with a series of activities such as bake sales, dance contests and placing a "designated donation box" for the students to donate with the encouragement that they will receive extra credit in their Armenian language classes if they make at least three donations. As well as the telethons, the Fund is also supported by individual donors and companies in the USA.

Adriaans (2019) examines the humanitarian campaigns of the Armenia Fund in 2013 and 2014 to construct a road between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia and how a "transnational ritual sphere" was produced by this in the Armenian diaspora. The author (2019, p.83) states that the Pan-Armenian Telethon generates "moral sensibilities, affective geographies and flows of finances" in the diasporic communities and concludes that these sensibilities are led by the fundraising event, which functions as a "*diasporic* governance" (italics in original), which concretes Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh in the Armenian identity of diaspora members materially, and constructs "subjectivities in Los Angeles as objectively tied to the present-day homeland".

Bakalian (1994, pp.440-441) regards financial assistance to the organisations as a "prevalent method of token participation" of the Armenian-Americans who are sustaining their Armenian identities as symbolic in their comfortable lifestyle far away from their native lands. However, it is seen clearly in the diaspora mobilisation for the conflicted part of their homeland, Nagorno-Karabakh, as the place where the collective identity of the Armenians ossifies in the diaspora. Bakalian (1994, p.441) states that there

is a possibility of "the survival of Armenian-Americans as a collectivity" as Armenian institutions become more professional and influential. Donations can be made to the Fund on its website, by bank transfer and through partner organisations. Eva, a second-generation community member who plays an active role in the Hayastan Foundation in Toronto, says that for the size of the community in Toronto, they are very successful in raising large amounts of money not because all the Armenians in the community donate to the Fund, but because a very small number of people make very large contributions. Depending on the projects, the size of donations changes. On the other hand, as a concrete example that shows average interest in the Fund's events, Eva mentions the annual banquets of the Fund in Toronto where regular attendees are mostly first-generation Armenians:

> Hayastan Foundation does one banquet each year; we do a very strong push to get the young university/ high school students there. So, there's maybe two or three tables full, we do a special price [for them]. So, maybe 20-30 maximum people out of 300, you know, of 30 tables three of them are youth at this banquet, for instance, it happens once a year, we bring one speaker, keynote speaker, like we've had people from Artsakh, we've had the priest from Artsakh. We've had the head of Hayastan Foundation from Armenia this year. We've had the head of the Hayastan Foundation from California. […] There's something like that. Not many young people…

<div align="right">(2<sup>nd</sup> generation, Toronto, female)</div>

The fact that the Armenian youth is not physically involved in the activities of the organisation does not mean that they do not support it. The organisation's projects are circulated on social media outlets and are accessible to social media users of the community. So, donating on the internet is a very common method not only amongst the native-born Armenians but also first-generation Armenians. In other words, mobilising via online channels is another way for transnational engagements.

One of the organisations which fosters the younger generation's attendance in diasporic affairs is the Armenian Students' Association (ASA, established in 1910 in the USA).

The organisation today functions in several colleges[66] in the USA and Canada and hosts numerous events for young people. According to a regular participant in ASA events in New York, some proceeds go to Armenian schools in New York and New Jersey, but a much larger percentage is devoted to addressing needs in Armenia itself. According to the same participant, in the last few years, the proceeds have gone to the relief of Syrian Armenians. For example, the ASA event which I attended in New York City raised money to support the AGBU Syrian Armenian efforts.

In addition to the youth or cultural bodies of traditional organisations/institutions such as Armenian Church Youth Organisations of America/Canada, native-born Armenians are mobilised through transnational career-based social networks established after the late 1990s, such as the Armenian Engineers and Scientist of America (AESA), which also form a base for both exchanging ideas between diaspora and homeland and interactions of the local community with each other.

New-generation homeland organisations are also very prominent in the USA and the second- and third-generation Armenians' participation in them is high. The Children of Armenia Fund (COAF) is one of the best examples of this category. The COAF has offices in Yerevan and New York working to address infrastructural and educational deficiencies and to ameliorate health conditions in mainly rural areas and villages of Armenia since 2003. The COAF organises two major events: a high-end, annual winter Gala attracting 'elite' participants to raise millions of dollars to fund huge projects in Armenia, and a Summer Soirée offering more affordable tickets for younger attendees aged 25 to 35, to fund relatively small projects, such as building water pipelines in rural Armenia. The COAF's main focus is on Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. The organisation specifically supports displaced people in Nagorno-Karabakh after the recent war by supplying their essential needs, such as food, shelter and medical and psychological assistance (Vardanyan, 2020). It has many events throughout the year and in different places in Armenia and the USA. A diaspora activist who is heavily engaged

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[66] In addition to the student organisations, many colleges in the USA provide Armenian Studies Programs or conduct researches regarding Armenian history, culture and politics in their departments of Near or Middle Eastern Studies.

in the projects and activities of the COAF explains the mission and vision of the organisation and why it appeals to Armenians in the American milieu:

> COAF has been doing very well using America's legal framework. […] COAF is called a 501(c)(3) organization which basically means it is a charity or philanthropy that follows the best procedures meaning we are transparent, all of your money goes to a certain project and we've proven, so it's the most visible, transparent, honest… […] When Americans hear about COAF, the first question is, generally is: "What is Armenia?", "Where is Armenia?", "Who are Armenians?" It's very common in America. […] That being said, the desire to help, the desire to be charitable, and the desire to help people become capitalistic for the first time, meaning you go to a place where no one has been making money for 30 years, and with just a few operations, you can help this village, this family, you know, this teenager make money for the first time. I think Americans get excited by that idea.

<div align="right">(Hagop, 2<sup>nd</sup> generation, New York City, male)</div>

According to the same activist, COAF, as an organisation that fights poverty in Armenia, creates a heightened sense of identity amongst diasporic Armenians and fosters links with the Armenian government. In this, COAF partners with different organisations, such as Birthright Armenia, another 501(c)(3) organisation established by an Armenian-American in 2003, inspired by Birthright Israel, to support young diasporans across the world aged 21 to 32 to reinforce their links with Armenian culture and everyday life by offering them internships and volunteering work by subsidising travel expenses.[67]

In addition to new-generation and old traditional organisations, some compatriotic organisations undertake the role of sustaining the identity and diasporic awareness, even though they do not appeal to new-generation Armenians. Although they do not call themselves compatriotic societies, Bolsahay Cultural Association Toronto and the Armenian Association of Toronto (ATT) are active organisations whose members consist of first-generation Armenians from a particular geography[68]. For example, the

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[67] For further details of the Birthright organisation, see Tuncel (2014, pp.179-191).

[68] The AAT has also a youth group for those aged up to 35. There are some activities organised by the youth group such as movie screenings, trivia nights and camping to bring the youth together. There are also Western Armenian young members in Toronto amongst the attendees at these events.

ATT mainly consists of Persian-Armenians but its activities, which also subsidise funds for the locals in Karabakh, are not only for the Persian-Armenians in Toronto, there are also some events organised which can appeal to other groups of Armenians, such as the Hayastantsis. Zaven, who is involved in the AAT, states that the participant profile (Eastern or Western Armenians) depends on the events, and adds that

> We don't want to say that we are Parskahay [Armenian from Iran] Organisation, which means you're separating yourself. The whole idea was, from the beginning, to name a general name, Armenian Association like it's just Armenian. We are known in Toronto; our association is known to be kind of open for everybody. Because, the Dashnak Center, certain people go there and some other people never go to the Dashnak club. Some people go to AGBU, some other people never go to AGBU.

(1st generation, Toronto, male)

It was observed that the compatriotic societies did not seek to promote and improve the conditions of fellow ethnics in their hometowns or sending places except for a few examples in the early twentieth century.[69] Zaven stresses that it is important to help people in need in the middle of war-torn Karabakh rather than Armenians living in Iran who mostly have better living conditions.

Diaspora agencies in North America function in a complementary way. The vast majority of the community members engage in community affairs through cultural and humanitarian organisations without any partisan motives. Many cultural organisations avoid partisan politics, which are widely disfavoured by native-born Armenians (Bamberger, 1999. p.91). I will now discuss the ways of engagement of the community members in the diasporic affairs and their motivations for being part of the community through particular organisations.

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[69] Here, it is worth noting that with initiatives of the Bolsahays and supports from other diaspora Armenians in Toronto, the Armenian St. Giragos Church in Turkey was renovated at the end of the successful discussions with the Turkish state.

## 6.3 Modes of engagements in the diasporic fields

In this subsection, I discuss how community members express their sense of belonging to the diasporic identity through engaging in the diasporic spaces. I will first briefly present their sentiments regarding community life and the ethnic institutions/organisations which are the catalysts in forcing attachment to the identity. Then, I will describe the motivations behind their involvement in community affairs. Finally, I will illustrate their ways of being engaged in two intersectional diasporic spaces, the local-diasporic fields where "in-border communications" of the community members occur (Chaloyan, 2017, p.102) and the transnational social fields which represent "real cross-border practices and engagements of immigrants" (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004; Chaloyan, 2017, p.100) along with their demographic characteristics and relationships with the Armenian associations and institutions.

In Chaloyan's conceptualisation of the "local-diasporic field", the dynamics taking place in the field refer to Armenia through the "conversations, shared memories, and nostalgia for the homeland", and for this reason, the field is where "transnational aspects of ties manifest in the imagination" not "the real border-spanning activities" (2017, p.100). The application of the notion to my analysis includes manifestations both of ties with Armenia and of commonalities of the ethnic identity, which not only ground on Armenia but also reflect the collective memory and cultural practices of the western diaspora, such as movie and documentary screening events about the Ottoman Armenians, gatherings of a sub-group of the community or a picnic event where all the food is from the cuisine of the place they came from.

As in many collective structures in which "the associations, however weak, bind people together", Armenian community life usually occurs in particular diaspora spaces which are *defined* (Davies and Herbert, 1993, p.1) by the specific features of the community whose members share the same sense of belonging or meet on the common ground consisting of similar values. Relph (1976, p.141) states that these areas can be envisaged as *place*s representing "deep emotional and psychological ties" of the community members to their "human existence" as much as their "individual and communal identity". This also corresponds to the "affective dimension" of the place attachment in

line with the conceptualisation of Davies and Herbert (1993, p.100). The Armenians in the community represent their sense of belonging to their identity components by engaging in their defined ethnic realms in which local and transnational interactions occur. Relph (1976, p.49) emphasises the notion of the 'insideness' of a place and states that being insider reinforces individuals' connection to the place depending on the degree of being inside. Relph (1976, p.50) draws attention to a boundary between being inside and outside a place and accepts that depending on intentions and interests, the degree of insideness changes and can be "immediate and direct" in different modes: (1) behavioural insideness, which refers to a person's physical appearance in a place, (2) empathetic insideness, which implies emotional attendance in and engagement with a place and (3) existential insideness, which corresponds to "complete and unself-conscious commitment to a place". Relph (1976, p.50) also states that there are also indirect forms of insideness through novels and other media. Using chiefly social media and various online platforms can be added to this mode of 'being inside'. In line with this analysis, Armenians' physical, cultural and emotional attachments to the community and transnational affairs vary depending on their interest and focus. In other words, it cannot be asserted that all the second-, third- and later generation Armenians involved in my research have 'existential insideness' for their ethnic group as much as the first-generations, although they nevertheless have strong emotional attachments. They are also affiliated with different identities in their 'home' as an "arena where differing interests struggle to define their own spaces" (Rapport and Dawson, 1998, p.17). Nevertheless, they are not fully outside the community. They do not dedicate their engagements to a single socio-cultural, political or professional environment in the host country. They adopt multifaceted approaches when interacting with ethnic organisations, rather than choosing to be inside an exclusive group or association. That is the main differentiation in their ways of involvement in the community from the first-generation Armenians.

### 6.3.1 The multiplicity of representative channels and fragmentation of belongings

One of the most noticeable characteristics of Armenian community life is the propensity to represent the community with an excessive number of organisations. Depending on the political and geographical differences, which is more meaningful for the first-generation diaspora members as I elaborated in the previous chapter, the different articulations of the ethnic identity and its effects on the sub-grouping within the community can be one dimension in which to bring to light a large number of the Armenian organisations. They engage in community affairs in line with their cultural backgrounds without feeling any complexities concerning their belongings. However, the excessive number of organisations is a matter of complaint significantly for younger generations of both Armenian communities in this study. This feature of community life is regarded by the community members as a barrier to the Armenians acting as a unified front. Louisin states that having different organisations representing each group leads to wasted time, energy and resources:

> […]. [W]e have a joke in Armenian and I think it's very informative. If two Armenians meet, you know, anywhere in the world, they will build three churches; one for each one of them to go to, and one for no one to go to, and it's funny but it's sad because there has to be a church that you don't go to, that you defy, that you do not feel like part of the community with. So, we're trying to say that we are extraneous, we have two people and they need to have three churches for two people. It is extraneous. It's a waste of resources. It's a stratification of a tiny group of people that have been dispersed throughout the world to become an even tinier group of people. We first notice those differences between us. "Oh, you're an Istanbul-Armenian". "Oh, you're a Lebanon-Armenian, Tehran-Armenian…" We first notice these differences and only as an afterthought do we manage to remember that we're all Armenian.
>
> (2nd generation, New York City, female)

A desire for founding an umbrella organisation that would encompass all diaspora organisations and would be able to conduct transnational practices and community affairs in a more efficient way is a recurrent idea. Creating places representing local belongings generally perplexes the sense of belonging to the community as a whole for the native-born Armenians who have multiple belongings. For example, Avo, a second-generation Bolsahay, who is not a politically oriented participant in community affairs,

says that he is on the same page in cultural aspects as Armenians from Istanbul, but still claims to be part of a bigger community that is not demarcated by the geographical differences in his mind. He expresses his confusion about which part of the community he belongs to with these words:

> I think it would be better if the Armenians just had one cultural centre, doesn't matter where they're from. They've got to start understanding that right now, we're not only from Bolis, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt. Now we're from South America. We're from different parts of the United States, we're from Canada, from Australia, Greece, Cyprus. So, it's starting to get more and more diverse. To have separate organizations that are from a particular place… Well then, what am I? Should I be part of Canadian? Or should I be part of the Bolsahay group?
>
> (2nd generation, Toronto, male)

Avo's rhetorical questions imply the notion of "modes of social differentiation" which Vertovec (2015, pp.10-12) associates with diversity studies and with social thought of "self-ascription and ascribed by others" as one of the analytical lenses through which several disciplines in the humanities consider "modes of social differentiation". The community's tendency to sub-grouping, mainly in Toronto, has resulted in a large number of organisations with identical missions, leading to a common point of complaint: the absence of a unified representative ground in the community.

In addition to the lack of a unified ground in which all community members are represented, the multiplicity of similar community activities hosted by different organisations at the same time creates a contest between them. Ani, an AGBU activist, says that the existence of numerous associations can be considered a good sign of the willingness to preserve the identity in different aspects. But the similar agendas of the organisations lead to competition amongst them to attract the community:

> If twenty organizations are doing New Year's Eve or three, four cultural events in one month or three, four concerts in one month, people cannot go to all [of them], so at some point, they need to decide. In a way it's nice, it's healthy to have all these Armenian organizations. But at some point, they are conflicting with each other because they all do the same kind of events.
>
> (1st generation, Toronto, female)

As discussed above, the majority of the community affairs are voluntary. Talai (1989, p.12) believes that one of the significant reasons for the plurality and variety of the

diaspora organisations is that, in a way, they depend on the dedication and unpaid labour of community members. Ani's approach might not support Talai's view about the multiplication of associations. Rather, the commitment to sustaining the ethnic identity and supporting the community is regarded as "healthy". Neuvart, who has strong ties with AGBU-Toronto, says that she felt a disconnection and competitive situation between the organisations/institutions, even those which are part of the same community centre, and she adds that this competitive atmosphere stems from the fact that similar community activities are carried out by separate organisations. The characteristics of diasporas, as Werbner (2002, p.123) articulates, highlight the multiplicities of discourses and dissensions and the struggle for members amongst "sectarian, gendered or political groups" within the same diasporic community, and characterise diasporic groupings. Similarly, this picture drawn by Neuvart leads community members to choose between several activities with the same purpose but hosted by different associations at the same time. She summarises her observations on this disconnection and its effect on the particular group members' desires to participate in specific events as follows:

> In the last 10-15 years, there's been a huge disconnect between our church [Holy Trinity Armenian Church] and AGBU. The first thing that started the disconnect was the school closing. The relationship was that the school, so I would say, AGBU day school, everyone who was part of the day school would be a part of the Church community. You don't have to attend Church regularly, but let's say if the church was having, let's say, a picnic, a lot of the people who are attending the Church picnic would be people from AGBU. And then, for whatever reason, we felt, at least the people from AGBU, felt that the Church was almost competing with us. So, we would have a picnic and then two weeks later they would have a picnic, then they started to do a big New Year's party. So, the Church started to do a New Year's party and now AGBU doesn't do a New Year's party because the Church does it. So, it was in constant divide and competition. They would do something, we would do something. So, we can't ask our community every weekend to come to every event. […]. But people can't go to all of them, right? I found that people started to choose between the Church and AGBU, and of course, more people are going to choose the Church. Why? Because it's the house of God.

> (3rd generation, female, Toronto)

In this case, in choosing which channel to partake in group activities, religious belongings come into play. This excerpt is reminiscent of early community practices when the political camps were distinctive in the American communities. Atamian (1955,

p.357) tells how four or five picnics organised by different groups hosted "public speakers who would present diametrically opposite points of view", occurred simultaneously. In contrast, there are some remarks in favour of the existence of various organisations in the community. A 30-year-old, second-generation Razmik from Toronto thinks that there is a need to have multiple organisations due to the involvement of many people with different interests in the community. Similarly, Yeraz, a first-generation Toronto-Armenian, feels that having a variety of organisations with different purposes is vital since individuals in the community have varied mentalities, interests and sentiments and that the existence of multiple organisations will help them maintain their identity. In New York City, my observations suggest that rather than community members feeling that they have to choose one organisation over another when they take time out of their busy city life, they tend to participate in any events which suit them regardless of which organisations host them. One reason for that tendency is related to the dispersed state of Armenian inhabitants and institutions/organisations across the city. Here, the activities are not necessarily hosted in Armenian church halls, they can take place in different places, such as exhibitions or movie screenings in museums or specific cinemas. The Armenians do not always interact with their ethnic cognates through the organisations. In addition to gathering in the personal spaces, home parties are very popular amongst the first-generation and native-born young Armenians as much as in the Toronto community.

## 6.3.2 A sense of co-responsibility and familiarity

The preservation and transmission of identity depend on maintaining and strengthening the sense of belonging to the ethnic domains which represent it. Davies and Herbert (1993, p.103) draw attention to one function of the affective dimension of place: empowerment. The authors (1993, p.103) stress its relation to the place and underline that "the affective domain" should be expanded to include a component that measures how much people believe they have control over their surroundings, in terms of being able to affect the future of their community. It can be said that the Armenian Toronto Community Center and its affiliated bodies can mobilise its community and also Armenians who are unaffiliated with the Center, with a great efficacy of organisational

structure. Eva from the Toronto community says that when an event is organised by the Center, their hall is full. She explains that:

> That Pomegranate Film Festival that they do, you know, full of young people, so they put them in charge. They're very smart. They give all the responsibilities to the youth, and they say, "You go, do it", and those kids, they're going to do it, they get donations for productions from drinks. I marvel at it. It is incredible and they empower them. That's the word. They empower them. They say, "Go, do it"; "It's yours." And those people do it. It increases Armenian awareness, Armenian nationalism, Armenian anything...

> (2nd generation, Toronto, female)

The existence of the organisations is interlinked with the degree of participation. On that point, I would like to consider their main motivations for being part of the diasporic community. Werbner (2002, p.126) draws attention to "an orientation and a sense of co-responsibility" which makes people "buy into" a diaspora community where there is no unified "command structure" which can mobilise communities. Therefore, the "material performances" of the sense of co-responsibility, which sometimes cross borders, are constituted (Werbner, 2002, p.129).

The majority of the first-generation participants in my research stated they had started to be involved in community life shortly after they settled in the host countries. They stated that they did not feel alienated towards the established community, mostly because they had already mobilised in their countries of origin. For example, Sona, who went to an AGBU Armenian school in Syria where she was born and raised, states that she was very active there and took a leading role in community affairs. Sona moved to Yemen after her marriage and lived there for a while; she speaks about her first impression when she encountered the community in Toronto:

> [T]here was barely any Armenian community in Yemen and Armenian communities just started to have their church and clubs and stuff. So it was kind of not very, very active. It was between friends like gatherings and so there wasn't a really good main organization that was working. So I was looking forward [to coming to Toronto] because I knew there were several [organisations]. AGBU had a big chapter here. So that's why I was looking forward to coming because I knew there would be chances for being involved and doing whatever I used to do back home in Syria.

> (1st generation, Toronto, female)

The feeling of ethnic solidarity which newcomers felt when they first moved to the host country might not apply to Armenians from Turkey, mainly in Toronto. As was discussed in the previous chapter, Toronto-Bolsahay participants initially felt isolated by the community. Moreover, they did not have institutional/organisational opportunities in Turkey as much as Middle Eastern Armenians, except for schools and churches, in which they could freely express their ethnic identities. Moreover, the language barrier between English and Armenian also prevented newcomer Bolsahays from becoming involved actively in the community. Today, they lean more towards mobilising through the AGBU.

Regarding the native-born Armenians, the sense of gratitude to the community in which they grew up is the most common reason behind volunteering in the community. Growing up in a particular Armenian circle with ethnic cognates, which greatly derives from the family tradition and parents' encouragement, plays a role in choosing to support a particular part of the community. Yervant, who is actively involved in AGBU-hosted activities says:

> My father, traditionally I think, has always been more along with, on that side of the community, on the AGBU side, the Etchmiadzin church and so forth. So that's why, more or less, like, my brother and I, we grew up there. When I decided to give back [to the community], I wanted to give back to the organization that gave me a lot of those opportunities. [But] we've collaborated with other youth groups there, for the big events like genocide commemorations and so on and so forth, always supported each other.
>
> (2nd generation, Toronto, male)

Similarly, Seda, who conducts her diasporic activism in Dashnak-related organisations, recounts how she reconnected with the community which she broke with after graduating from the Armenian school where she had studied until the eighth grade:

> I guess I was forced, if that, say my parents, to stay, which is how I got involved in the organization. […]. Because my mom was and is involved in the Hamazkayin. She was always my example because she was always working and doing things for the Saturday school, and the church, and for the dance group, and prayers. But I guess it really came from me once I started college, because I was completely away from the Armenian community, so there I, kind of, found my own self. And whatever class I took in literature or history or whatever, I would try to put the Armenian in there.

As in Seda's case, some of my interviewees in the second and third generations stated that they had a turning point in their lives to bring their ethnic identities and interaction with their ethnic cognates and Armenia to the forefront. Levitt (2002, p.139) indicates that the life-course is one of the elements which affect the amount to which members of the second generation sustain the transnational ties, and sustaining these ties varies with different demands at different stages of the life-cycle of individuals. A fourth-generation interviewee, David, states that he and his brother are more involved in the community than their parents, although most of his third-generation Armenian friends are still less involved than their parents. David explains that he started to become more engaged in Armenian affairs in his mid-twenties after having moved to New York City for his work. David's feeling of solidarity and help which he had from his Armenian connections in the city led him to interact socially with Armenian circles there. In this regard, it can be argued that his attachment to that particular space corresponds to "the experience of being inside", which is evoked by the feeling of solidarity and is continued by routines and recurring events which are embedded in "the peculiar properties of a place" as Relph states (1976, p.141).

Bakalian (1994, p.204) reports that some of her interviewees referred to "an identity search in early adulthood", which also coincides with a time when people are building their relationships for friendships or marriage. Bakalian's quantitative results (1994, p.204), however, shows that the differences between the various phases "of the life cycle were not statistically significant". In my case, which focuses on the mobilised segment of the community, a need to identify themselves with the ethnic background in their mid- or late twenties are one of the important motivations behind engaging in the community and transnational activities. In a similar vein, Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004, p.1018) state that at different stages of the lifespan and in different situations, the desire and aptitude to engage in transnational behaviours "will ebb and flow", although they accept that engagement in the transnational field is "not be central to the lives of the most of the second generation" and is not to the same degree as their descendants' engagements. The rupture at some point of the life-cycle to engage in "local-diasporic" and transnational practices is not only peculiar to the native-born community members. Similarly, a first-

generation Armenian from New York City said that he started to be involved in the community in his fifties. Responsibilities for family and work might hinder city people from giving their time to community affairs.

The interrelation with ethnic cognates in the group is very significant for choosing whether to engage in the community or a particular part of the community. Individual experiences might also impose a limitation not to be part of the group. As an example, Shushan, a second-generation Armenian, in Toronto told me that although she is very active in the community, her brother prefers to keep away from the community since he had frequently been bullied by Armenians as much as non-Armenians for his physical appearance and health issues during his adolescence. According to Shushan, his feeling of being betrayed by his ethnic fellows, which derived from his expectation to be protected or supported by "his kind of people", led him to sever his emotional attachment to the community. Therefore, the significance of personal experiences with the community is evident to feel like part of the group.

In Armenians' ways of engagement in community affairs, to begin with, the degree of interaction with the Armenian church is important. Regular attendance is largely on the first-generation Armenian level. One community member who had moved to New York City from Yerevan said that she had observed that church attendance was higher in the diaspora than amongst Armenians in Armenia. The reason for this might be attributable to the Soviet impact on religious practices. She regarded the reason as the fact that the Hayastantsis are less concerned about losing their identities than Armenians in the diaspora. Nevertheless, this anecdote needs to be confirmed by a comparative study between the Hayastantsis in Armenia and the traditional diaspora, although it is a significant point as an observation.

Native-born young Armenians have no interest in Sunday services. The vast majority of the native-born Armenians aged 18-35 have no regular church attendance except for those who go to the Evangelical Church. The younger members of the community do go to church services on religious holidays and for weddings and funerals. It cannot be said that they are completely disinterested in religion, especially considering its role in evoking national belonging, but their engagement in cultural and political activities

outweigh their active presence in religious bodies. It must be noted that there is a significant difference in this trend amongst young Toronto-Armenians who are affiliated with the Prelacy church in the Dashnak community centre. My observations show that almost from each generation, church attendance there on Sundays was distinctively higher than at any church in New York City and also the Etchmiadzin church in Toronto, considering that the vast majority of the community are Apostolic Armenians. This is not surprising bearing in mind that young Toronto Armenians who attend schools of the ARF circle, or were raised in the same community circle by interacting with its organisations, have a strong national consciousness and actively manifest the components of the identity.

In general, in both field sites, the majority of younger generations generally do not have deep knowledge of the political and administrative division between the churches. Needless to say, most of them are aware of the political tension between the churches and their communities, even if the tension is slight. They participate in any event in which they are interested regardless of which organisation or institution hosts it.

The most appealing events for the Armenians in their everyday lives are sports or cultural activities such as Armenian dance performances, concerts, art exhibitions and lectures, presentations and philanthropic events for Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh hosted by the main traditional organisations, the Armenia Fund and Armenian student clubs in the universities. Some of the activities which are performed in the diaspora such as Armenian folk dancing or basketball groups consisting of Armenians are also exhibited at tournaments and dance shows in Armenia. Most groups of young people are invited to Armenia through the homeland organisations for these performances. In other words, their engagements occurring in the local sphere can be translated into transnational practices. It is possible to assert that the most attended event is the 24 April demonstration for Justice and Commemoration. This is attended by different Armenian communities in many states and not only refers to the consciousness of being a part of an *imagined community* but also exemplifies a transnational social field that fosters "simultaneity" (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004, p.1003) amongst people with the same ethnic origin. The majority of the respondents, except for those interviewees who say that they are too old to stand for a long time, participate annually in the march. Those

who do not attend the demonstration state that they generally participate in meetings held in the churches for the anniversary. Maral, in Toronto, emphasises that the people in the Dashnak community tend more to attend the demonstration regularly. She explains that the trauma of the 1915 catastrophe is the significant identity element strongly instilled by the Dashnaks' political platform and their subsidiary organisations, and she says that in the non-Dashnak community

> [Y]ou can see it [traumatic collective memory] but not as strong... During the hundredth anniversary of the genocide, so many AGBU people came to participate, but the following year they didn't.

<div align="right">(1<sup>st</sup> generation, female, Toronto)</div>

Even though the hundredth anniversary is regarded as symbolic by many and a decrease in attendance at demonstrations in the following year was observed, the commemoration march continues to create a common ground where the community members' political activism is most concretised. The demonstrations and anniversaries on the one hand construct diasporic spaces in which political activism and advocacy for the Armenian Cause are manifested, and on the other hand, they signify "realms of memory" in that they are "the ultimate embodiments of a commemorative consciousness that survives in a history which, having renounced memory, cries out for it" (Nora, 1996, p.6). In their everyday lives, however, community engagement does not necessarily occur in the political sphere. The majority of the participants are not politically affiliated, to say the least. The research does not exclude those who are politically engaged or nurtured in the ARF-affiliated organisations and community circles, which have arguably an influence on the identity in line with the ideological spectrum of the party. It should be noted that ARF's ideology reflects one aspect of Armenian nationalism, and different national articulations in the community can be found even without any political affiliations, as in involvement in the 24 April marches or the Nagorno-Karabakh protests, which are the best examples of the diasporic activism of diasporic communities triggered by the "mobilisation processes" (Sökefeld, 2006).

### 6.3.3 Changing relations with organisations in the manifestation of the identity

The role of organisations in creating a particular type of Armenian in the diaspora was one of the first questions on which I pondered before and during the fieldwork. The Armenian collective identity in the diaspora, as Tölölyan (2000, p.109) shows, is produced by the economic, cultural and political elites composed of "journalists, intellectuals, teachers, scholars, activists, artists, performers, and entertainers" and generally they conduct their activities in affiliation with "organizations and institutions that offer material support and make ideological claims". Tölölyan (2000, p.109) also states that the cultural and political production and commitments of the diasporic identity create a competitive ground for these elites and they also deal with difficulties deriving from the fact that new identities are constantly being developed while the older ones are "criticized and abandoned". Similarly, Vertovec (1999, p.451) argues that mainly amongst young immigrants, the aspects of culture and identity "are often self-consciously selected, syncretized and elaborated from more than one heritage". The traditional organisations are believed to carry a "package of values" to use one interviewee's words, which "entails specific cultural and political commitments of both the local and transnational varieties" as Tölölyan (2000, p.109) argues. The activities of political organisations, chiefly of the Dashnaks/ARF, politicise the Armenian identity whose big part has already been built politically in other Armenian diasporas such as in Lebanon. Although the party in question has sister organisations that conduct the cultural production of collective identity, their ways of preserving the culture are perceived as politically loaded, according to most of the participants. Alin, who works for mainly philanthropic activities for Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh in New York City, emphasises that the new identity which Armenians are moving towards is not linked with political activity, but rather the new identity has a mix of the cultural side of Armenianness, and is more focused on allocating the resources to strengthen the social and cultural part of Armenians' life in the USA or Armenia. Most of the young respondents who are of the second and third generations share Alin's view. Alin, a 35-year old, first-generation Armenian living in the diaspora, gives importance to the roles of the traditional organisations in carrying on, directing, spreading and helping to

flourish the Armenian identity values, but she brings a new perspective to the Armenian diasporic identity:

> Younger groups, younger associations, like the Society for Orphaned Armenian Relief (SOAR), the Children of Armenia Fund (COAF), Young Professionals, built new values, and over the years they just carry those values to the more mature organizations and they just do the work of preserving those values. […]. They have their own mission, they're mission-oriented organizations. For example, COAF works for the values of children, children's care, children's rights. The same is like the SOAR which works particularly for the rights of the orphan Armenians in Armenia. […]. So those are small organizations [which] build, create, I want to say, maybe sometimes new values. The Armenian Young Engineers Association, Armenian Doctors Association… They do not have much bearing in some ways, not much into preserving the values, but they work in creating new work, new approaches to the older values perhaps. Like, for example, the Armenian Engineers Association, it's particularly organizing lots of talks, lots of debates which built this merging of the two generations of the Armenians in the US, Armenians from Armenia, Armenians from the diaspora, they come to those debates. They come to the mentorship program they have, and it builds a new culture because we're not that merged. So, it helps to build a new culture.

> (1st generation, New York City, female)

Efforts to create a transnational field seem to be the main concern for the young Armenians, and the transnational activities advance on an independent path from the orbit of the traditional initiatives of the diaspora. This does not mean that the conventional organisations do not have transnational agendas on behalf of Armenia. They also conduct several programmes to enable the youth to strengthen their ties with their homeland and have diaspora consciousness. The newborn associations in this category adopt an approach that is beyond any political representations. The new-generation organisations are also a good base for establishing connections with people coming from the same ethnic kin, probably the same age group and the same professional circles in the diaspora. As in the case of the traditional diaspora organisations' events and activities, younger associations are founding spaces to forge interaction for professional and philanthropic purposes. For example, Arman, a second-generation, 28-year-old, relatively recent New York City resident from New Jersey, working in the intelligent technology area, regularly attends the events, workshops and lectures of Armenian Engineers and Scientist of America (AESA)'s New York-New Jersey Section

founded in 2009. Arman attends various community events hosted by different organisations. For example, he attends COAF's events, such as the Summer Soirée, which he can afford. He is actively involved in AGBU events and had also been involved with the Armenian Church Youth Organisation of America since he was a 14-year-old member of a junior group where he established his first Armenian acquaintances within those circles. Although he had stopped being involved in the church group five years earlier, he explains his motivation for being engaged in these organisations as follows:

> It felt more like home, I guess because obviously, we would all relate to one another easily, much more easily, and other non-Armenian friends or you know, whatever, totally different, the vibe, the connection was wholly different.
>
> (2nd generation, New York City, male)

Although he has different social connections other than his ethnic circle, the Armenian network is where he feels most at home. The singularity in the ways of engagement in particular associations is not a frequent interaction type with community affairs amongst the young people born in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Personal preferences in engagement in part of the community can come from a family tradition, but it does not lead the community members to stick to a particular side of the community. For example, Razmik, a 30-year-old, second-generation in Toronto who was raised in ARF-circles and went to an ARS day school due to his family's political orientation, states that he is involved in a cultural organisation attached to the Etchmiadzin Church although he maintains his relationships in his old social milieu. According to another perspective given by Daron, another second-generation, 29-year-old Toronto Armenian, it is important to support the culture in the diaspora, but as a Canadian citizen, he thinks that adaptation to the dominant culture is equally significant in order not to feel like a foreigner:

> I went to Armenian school until grade six, and then finished, I didn't think the high school was being built while I was at high school age or almost around that time. But either way, I'm glad I didn't. I didn't want to go all through every grade only in Armenian because I don't want to be in that bubble, because my girlfriend and her friends did go all the way and they're from that community, and they graduated from that school and then half of them have an accent; half of them can't have an English accent when they're speaking English, but they were born here. If you're born here and you're so sheltered in your community, you have an accent when you speak English with other

> Anglophones. That's not good for me. That means that you're too sheltered and you're not actually experiencing an adaptation as a Canadian. You're just an Armenian living in Canada.
>
> (2nd generation, Toronto, male)

It was emphasised in the first chapter that subsequent generations' identities are more affiliated than those of their elders. Tölölyan (2014, p.87) underlines that young Armenians, as many young diasporic native-borns who are educated and mostly those living in the west, are challenged to identify themselves with a particular identity in terms of "their social, cultural and political identities". In this regard, Tölölyan (2010, p.39; 2014, p.87) states that "filiation", in which the identity derives from family and individuals can choose between keeping the identity in line with their lineage or community and being assimilated, is replaced by "affiliation" in which individuals prefer to be involved in community affairs and transnational fields actively, and reject, or are unwilling to learn and follow, some components of the identity, such as speaking the language. On this point, Glick-Schiller (2009) points out that the same group of people can have "the possibilities of multiple identities" which derive from "multiple constituting forces", and suggests the use of the word "diversity" with the concept of multiplicity. In other words, there are multiple ways of experiencing the same phenomenon within a diverse but same group of people. Glick-Schiller (2009) also indicates that the multiplicities can overlap which enables the identity to take various forms (see also Pattie, 2019). Moreover, as Eriksen (2015, p.374) states, "each person expresses a complex blend of diverse influences". The identity construction in a multifaceted dimensional way, as Tölölyan (2014, p.87) says, dominates the 18-30 generation who are not thoroughly and "easily mobilized by older diasporic or homeland institutions"; the engagement of young people in the diasporic spaces is optional in line with their interests. Hagop, a second-generation, 30-year-old diaspora activist, states that the young generation's demands are gravitating towards increasing their cultural presence rather than developing facilities for them in teaching and using the language. On the other hand, Martin, another community member, notes that there is a strong desire amongst second- and third-generation Armenians to learn and use Armenian, which he credits to the increased connection with Armenia. Nevertheless, looking at native-born

young participants in the Toronto community who have the command of the Armenian language, it is possible to say that they follow a similar path with their ethnic cognates in New York City in line with Hagop's observation.

Based on my observations, the community's engagement in Toronto, regardless of the generations, is a bit more demarcated by the conventional diasporic organisations compared with the New York City community. Although this tendency can be seen more amongst the first-generation, there are also Armenians who only mobilise within the scope of a particular organisation amongst the second-generation participants. Those who grew up around Dashnak/ARF-affiliated institutions/organisations gravitate towards sustaining their relations with the same circle when engaging in community affairs. For example, Zepour, a 26-year-old community member, involves in the community through AYF, explains her adherence to a particular part of the community as follows:

> For me specifically, it was as I grew up around it, it's a tradition. And I loved it once I joined it. I didn't think that there was a need to look elsewhere.

<div align="right">(2<sup>nd</sup> generation, New York City, female)</div>

It must be noted that adherence to a particular institution or community circle is also seen amongst second-generation Armenians whose ages ranged from the mid-40s to the 60s, those who were born during the presence of the political schism in the community, even though it is not significantly rigid. For example, Ghevont, a 54-year-old diaspora activist from the Assembly, explains how and why he engaged in Armenian affairs on the side of political activism:

> We all grew up in [the] church. So we have a deep sense of faith, first of all, then our parents educated us, and we were the first generation to go to college, so then we became educated. Then you want to give back, so you have a choice to give back, how do you give back? […]. My way of giving back is advocacy, to advocate for Armenia, for Armenian-Americans in this country. I chose the Armenian Assembly and it was the right choice because I don't want to be dictated to. I want to control sort of what our board here determines what's best for Armenian issues that we're going to bring to Washington. So the Armenian-American issues are determined here, not in Armenia. ANCA gets direction from the ARF so they get direction from a political party.

<div align="right">(3<sup>rd</sup> generation, Boston, male)</div>

Ghevont, who was raised in a politically divided community, tended to align himself with a particular organisation based on his personal standpoint which was shaped around a well-educated, Armenian community-oriented family. The majority of the participants in both research sites tend to adhere less to a specific organisation when they involve themselves in cultural, educational or philanthropic activities. I came across many first- and second-generation parents in the Toronto community who did not prioritise their political identity and who were *chezok*s,[70] who brought their third-generation children, to be involved in different parts of the community. For example, Tamar, a second-generation Toronto Armenian, told that she initially sent her children to the Dashnak-based ARS day school due to its high quality of education, although she and her family had grown up in the circle of the Armenian Evangelical Church and an AGBU community. However, Tamar, like other first- and second-generation parents in Toronto, who took their children out of the ARS Armenian day school after a certain age to send them to a public school and to the Armenian Saturday school at the Etchmiadzin Church, says that she does not want her children to be raised only in an Armenian bubble. In addition to wanting to bring her children up as members of Canadian society, Tamar states that she does not agree with the strong nationalism, which she thinks is fostered in Dashnak organisations and communities. She explains this choice as follows:

> There are certain things we don't want. […]. We did not keep them [there] for the school, and I wouldn't keep them for cultural things, but there are other things that become much more national … may not be political but nationalistic. We want them to be proud of their Armenian heritage and who they are and keep it. But we're not … we as a family or as my husband and I, aren't nationalistic, you know, like knowing all the revolutionary songs and all that. Even last night we came to the Kermes, at the end of the night, they're all singing a nationalist song. […]. We don't know any of that and we didn't grow up with that. Both my husband and I grew up in an Evangelical Church.

(2nd generation, Toronto, female)

Davies and Herbert (1993, p.85), with reference to Suttles (1972), state that *place* is a social construction that individuals and social groups build with their interpretations.

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[70] The word means "neutral", or "nonpartisan" in Armenian politics, and it is a different category from "indifferents" (Bakalian, 1994, pp.95, 137).

Tamar, like many non-Apostolic Armenians (and also some Apostolic Armenians), prefers not to embrace any ideological approach in her Armenian interpretation. She finds that some Dashnak-related junior and youth organisations are very nationalist and militaristic, such as *Homenetmen*, which concentrates on sports and scouting activities for diaspora youth, and *Badanegan*, which is a junior social group attached to the AYF, where the children come together on Friday nights to play games and learn about Armenian history, songs and revolutionary stories. Libaridian (1981, pp.162-168) states that the revolutionary parties in the nineteenth century provided a progressive edge to the image of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, which would have enabled them to liberate themselves from their politically and economically oppressed status through revolution and to build their own future. Hence, it can be argued that Dashnaks continue to instil this image into the next generations as an identity marker. Nevertheless, Tamar accepts that an average young person who was raised within this Dashnak-related circle of organisations has more knowledge about political affairs in Armenia than she does. Even so, Tamar does not feel any hesitation about sending her daughter to be involved in *Hamazkayin*, the Dashnak cultural institution, for Armenian dances. In other words, she is selective.

Armenian Evangelicals avoid political discussions and focus on the spiritual and cultural side of the identity and generally become engaged in the church community and church-related sub-organisations with cultural, spiritual, educational, financial and humanitarian missions, such as the Armenian Missionary Association of America/Canada, AGBU-linked and philanthropic events of new homeland-orientated organisations. My Evangelical participants in both countries, like Tamar, stated that they do not adopt any political affiliation in terms of manifesting their identity in their everyday lives. Similarly, based on my observations in Toronto, numerous Catholic Armenians, whose number is small in the city, do not engage in the political activism in the diaspora either, and their identity manifestations in the diaspora generally become visible, apart from church attendance, through philanthropic organisations, such as the Armenia Fund, or cultural and humanitarian organisations, such as AGBU, and compatriotic and cultural meetings which are held by alumni of the Armenian Catholic high school in Istanbul, who are first generations in the diaspora and also belong to parishes of the Catholic

Church in Toronto. In this regard, the apolitical or neutral tendency amongst non-Apostolic Armenians continues in the way that Bakalian's survey demonstrated in the late 1980s, mostly because, again as Bakalian underlines, in the diaspora, the main schism started within the Apostolic Churches (Bakalian, 1994, p.127, see also Atamian, 1955, p.3).

## 6.4 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to show the diaspora engagements of the community members through updated visions and missions of the diasporic organisations and institutions. I have discussed organisations' efforts to create a sense of belonging in community members towards keeping their identity alive by involving themselves more in *local-diasporic* and *transnational social fields*.

Diasporic activism is stirred by different motivations which vary with different interests and are mostly encouraged by family traditions and social networks. Although the sense of a responsibility to "give something back" to the community, which derives from the feeling of gratitude and comes to the forefront for the second- and third-generation Armenians, the aims of keeping the identity alive, transmitting it to the next generations, supporting their independent homeland, which they desired for a long time, are dominant for the first-generation Armenians who are already mobilised in their countries of origin, except for the Bolsahays who lack ethnic institutions, other than the church. First-generation Armenians also involve themselves in the ethnic milieu to decrease the burden of a feeling of isolation in a foreign country by interacting with their ethnic cognates. This participation is mostly on the level of activities held by churches or compatriotic, cultural or alumni organisations.

Participation in the ethnic realm in local community affairs, and sustaining transnational practices are at different levels. The degree of participation, as Levitt (2002, p.125) states, changes with the socio-economic conditions and ethnic features of the immigrants, their demands, the interest of individuals at different stages of their lives, and the existence and variety of the institutional structures and networks of the ethnic groups in which they can choose the type of involvement which suits them best. In this

regard, the native-born Armenians who participated in this study presented a selective approach depending on their interest, their professional lives and sometimes their political preferences. Even though the plurality of the diaspora organisations is a matter of complaint, the existence of alternative representative channels to the traditional organisations and churches, which undertake several supportive roles for Armenians from professional to philanthropic, is a pulling factor for the young generations' engagement in the community, and enables them to sustain their identities and national awareness, feel a sense of solidarity and remain attached to the homeland.

In the following chapter, I will discuss the physical and psychological attachments of the participants, who invest their time and energy in the diasporic spaces, to Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh as a homeland. I will show how the concepts of home and homeland can be both distinctive and interchangeable in the sense of belonging of the participants and where they are referring to as their homes and homelands when they talk about their attachment.

# Chapter 7. Placing 'home' and 'homeland' into the sense of belonging of the Armenian diaspora members

## 7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I showed that the nature of diasporic engagement is multi-faceted, multi-sided and affiliated as a result of the varying senses of belonging, which change depending on the context. In this chapter, I will discuss the views and insights of my interviewees about notions of homeland and home. I seek to understand how they define the concept of homeland and home and how they relate to these definitions, thus revealing the hybrid characteristics of their attachments.

Kasbarian (2015a, p.360) notes that the homeland is "an orientation" allowing the geographically and culturally diverse Armenian diasporas to unify. As previously discussed, the diaspora was divided between those who were pro- and anti-Soviet Armenia. After 1965 relations between the homeland and the diasporas improved, even though this intimacy was hesitant (Tölölyan, 2000, p.121). However, the Spitak earthquake in 1988, the independence of Armenia, and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan transformed homeland-diaspora relations, leading to increased interaction. This was at both institutional and individual levels. The traditional diaspora parties were able to organise and conduct their activities on behalf of their 'homeland' despite some 'interruptions' (Panossian, 2005).

Transformation within the Armenian diaspora, thus led traditional diaspora organisations and institutions to update their agenda, focusing more on Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh issue to increase political, social and economic interaction between Armenia and the western diaspora, who have a different cultural background from Armenia. Moreover, as previously discussed, the foundation of new Armenian transnational organisations encourages native-born Armenians to engage with the homeland. In particular, these organisations provided Armenians who were born and raised in this

transition process with multiple opportunities to manifest their identities in transnational ways. Although their expression is less obvious than for previous generations, there is still a sense of belonging to a hyphenated and multi-placed identity as part of "cultural transmission" (Waite and Cook, 2011, p.244). Moreover, interest amongst all generations in transnational engagements fluctuates depending on significant events or crises in the homeland (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004, p.1013).

Nevertheless, as Tölölyan (2000, p.124) stresses, as in all diaspora communities, the majority, across all generations, are not normally involved in the "discursive and political life of its institutions" because of their daily obligations such as work and raising a family. Here, I focus on the segment of the community that is most engaged in local and transnational activities, chiefly through organisations, although their involvement is not necessarily constant and all-encompassing. The extent to which such individuals themselves share the discursive and material stance towards Armenia which organisations articulate, merits investigation. I, therefore, analyse how central the homeland is to Armenian community members who embody the diaspora's heterogeneity in geography, dialect, generation, culture, political orientation and host-country specific conditions (Panossian, 1998; Pattie, 2005a; Douglas and Bakalian, 2009; Kasbarian, 2015a; Tölölyan 2014) and thus potential emotional complexities about place attachment.

People can feel that they belong somewhere, but their allegiances can be "split" between locations (Anthias, 2006) because identities are built in an intersectional fashion. The complexity which the migrants feel regarding their place of origins and their transnational experiences may locate the idea of home "in different places simultaneously" (Blunt and Bonnerjee, 2019, p.273). Indeed, immigrants' definitions of homeland may include political evocations (Dwyer, 2002). For example, as Dwyer's study of young Britain-born Muslim Pakistani women shows, the Britishness of some second-generation immigrants is complicated by perceptions of their 'outsider' status in the host society; defined by Dwyer (2002, p.195) as the "politics of location". The sense of attachment of immigrant communities to a place as a home is also dependent on economic, social or political dynamics in host countries; as was evident in the widespread questioning of many Arab-Americans' attachment to the USA following the 9/11 attacks. (Staeheli and Nagel, 2006, p.1600).

There are evidently "different types of 'place sense-making'" amongst immigrant communities (Christou, 2011b, p.145), whose belongings to the place are continuously subject to a construction process. Dwyer (2002, p.197) states that the "process of *making home*" facilitates the construction of "syncretic" identities and multiple belongings. The sense of belonging to the home or homeland can sometimes be region-specific as the narratives of the initial immigrants are passed on to subsequent generations, shaping their perception of 'home'. However, Christou (2011b, p.146) argues that these narratives may create "*renunciation* of the 'family narrative'" or "*reconciliation* with the 'ideology/myth/dream of return'".

Some immigrants may feel at home with others who came from the same city or country, reflecting commonality in dialect or language. Migrants or diasporic communities may, therefore, create "socio-spatial" structures (Christou, 2011b, p.146; Greiner and Sakdapolrak, 2013, p.378) in which their translocal belongings become distinctive (Conradson and McKay, 2007, p.169) and embodied in the idea of 'home'. It is, therefore, necessary to discuss the homeland phenomenon beyond its physical borders, reflecting its contested nature in the literature (Brah, 1997; Gilroy, 1997; Anthias, 1998; Dwyer, 2002; Mavroudi, 2007; 2010; Tölölyan, 2012), and to examine it through an emotional lens for the diasporic people.

The majority of Armenians included in this study first defined their homeland as Armenia. The Republic of Armenia is a concrete idea as an outcome of the long-term longing for an independent country, which provides a space to which the diaspora can return whenever they want. However, when the real-life particularities of that homeland are at odds with the socio-cultural and economic realities of diasporic communities, the affective sense of belonging to the idea of homeland becomes complicated. Panossian (1998, p.184) states that attachments alternatively or concurrently relate to being Armenia, the host country or "the diaspora condition itself as *home*-land". In this context, a duality between home and homeland becomes significant for respondents who are engaged in the dominant culture of their host country. They regard home as being embodied in their everyday lives, familial or social interactions, memories, emotions (Blunt, 2005, p.506), and relations with institutional settings through which they reinforce their attachment to the group. These daily life practices occurring in the host

countries may or may not be embedded in their homeland orientation, or referred to as transnational spaces. In other words, where the respondents feel at home, they enhance their sense of belonging to a particular place, which can be Armenia, or another place, and to transnational networks by connecting with their co-ethnics or participating in particular activities.

For reasons summarised above, the location of the homeland remains contentious and important. The first section of this chapter will thus explore how my respondents constructed emotional and physical attachments to Armenia. Then I will explore the binaries between home and homeland, reflecting respondents' individual senses of belonging. In this manner, I will investigate perceived differences between home, homeland and ancestral land. Finally, I will explore the role of the 'lost territories' of historic Armenia in the place-attachment of the diasporic individuals, which also resonates with their emotional attachment to Nagorno-Karabakh (*Artsakh*).

In the chapter's second section, I will examine how the respondents' sense of belonging to Nagorno-Karabakh has been formed and its centrality in the Armenian diaspora identity, in relation to the concept of long-distance nationalism.

## 7.2 'Re-situating' belonging to the homeland

> Homeland… It didn't mean much to me before I went to Armenia. Before I went to Armenia, I felt like it was abstract.
>
> <div align="right">(Krikor, 3rd generation, New York City, male)</div>

This subsection considers the complexities of the respondents' relationship with the concept of homeland, which often reflects their experiences as individuals, as members of a particular geographical or generational cohort. I first discuss how Armenia becomes a concrete idea in the diasporic mind in the light of changing relations with Armenia. I then explore binaries between the notions of home and homeland, which are shaped by the cultural affinities of the interviewees. I also illustrate some exceptional examples from these two communities, which present different articulations beyond dualities about home and homeland. Finally, I discuss the role of 'lost territory' in the place attachment of the Armenian communities involved in this study.

## 7.2.1 Armenia: embodiment of a desire for a homeland

The majority of participants from each generation technically see Armenia as their homeland, in some cases further stating that "it is also Artsakh". Even though the concept of the homeland can be ambiguous and vague, and is frequently replaced by the word 'home', Armenia is the primary location of a concrete homeland in the diasporic mind. In the 1990s Bakalian (1994, pp.343-347) described Armenia and ancestral lands as a *spiritual homeland* (italics in original) as Armenians linked to the homeland through "make-believe emotional ties". Increasingly, however, the Armenian homeland has become visible in its concrete form for my interviewees in New York and Toronto. Those who were born and raised in the diaspora before Armenian independence commonly indicate that independence greatly strengthened their identification with Armenia, reflecting its new accessibility. Similarly, Fittante (2017, pp.150, 152-153) studied North American Armenian returnees to Armenia, finding that most felt an only limited attachment to Armenia as a 'homeland' before the Spitak earthquake, the establishment of the independent republic and the war in Karabakh, reflecting what Fittante calls a "triangulation of sudden and intense collective hardships besetting Armenia". My respondents frequently identified these same events as turning points, heightening their sense of responsibility for Armenia. In other words, they are "critical events", mobilising the diaspora for Armenia (Sökefeld, 2006).

Increased interest in the 'homeland', required the older diaspora, in particular, composed of descendants of the survivors of earlier persecutions to reconcile the gap between the "a mythical homeland and an actual "step-homeland"" (Kasbarian, 2015a, p.358). Diaspora organisations have actively encouraged diasporans' physical connection with Armenia. Despite their contested ideological and cultural positions, organisations have assumed a common role in imbuing diasporic community with sustaining links to their identity and homeland:

> You know we have to work hard. We have to take them for trips, camps in Armenia. Anyway, what they learn in Saturday school or everyday school, it's great. This is the first step to connect them to Armenia, but I know a hundred per cent, youth or students, when they go to Armenia, this is the best for them to have feelings and then suddenly feel close to their homeland. It's the best way, once they go, this is it, they change. […]. [T]hen, they see it. They learn about Lake

> Sevan. This is Ararat, this is *Sasuntsi Davit*, you know, they learn all these in the textbook, once they go there… And now it's very nice to visit for the young ones Armenia, they love it and they always want to go again. Before going there, it's a dream.

<div align="right">(Ani, 1<sup>st</sup> generation, Toronto, female)</div>

In a similar vein, Tamar, a second-generation Toronto-Armenian, states that the younger generations, including her children, influence each other when they see the posts of their peers' Armenian travels on social media. It thus appears that the greater the homeland's accessibility, the clearer the idea of Armenia as homeland will become. Native-born diaspora young people are now more involved in the cultural and ideological production of the homeland, through various organisational initiatives, which also shape their diasporic identity. Shushan, a second-generation, Toronto-Armenian explains changing perceptions of Armenia and its relation to diaspora identity across the generations:

> I don't know if the homeland changed the Armenianness in the diaspora or if other sources changed. The influences from here, the teachers that we have, the language books that we have, the discourse like whatever is published in the papers, how the culture is represented in the media. […]. I think that's the main influence. It's a lot more structured now because before independence it was very mixed with the Soviet culture; with independence, we kind of became like our own. We are able to speak our own language, have our own songs, have our own signs like not everything was Russian anymore, not everything was Russian on the radio. I think we kind of established more our identity after independence. But still, now, there is still Russian influence.

<div align="right">(2<sup>nd</sup> generation, female, Toronto)</div>

The independence allowed them to engage with the homeland and reproduce their own identity, which is peculiar to their culture as an *authentic Armenian*, thus influencing their performance of Armenian identity in the diaspora. Yet many diasporans still feel alienated from aspects of the culture in Armenia, reflecting its continuing Russian infections.

Neuvart, who does not stress cultural differences between diaspora and homeland, explains her strong attachment to Armenia, despite never having lived there, and identifies it as the locus of the Armenian people's concrete existence. Like her peer Ara, a second-generation New York Armenian, she thinks of Armenia as the place where culture and language are preserved, a sense which is reinforced by the reference to the

nation's traumatic collective narrative. Neuvart identifies a feeling of attachment to Armenia as a homeland, although accepting that this feeling is constructed by the efforts of the organisations:

> For sure, there is an influence, but not completely, because I know people who have not gone to an Armenian school or grew up close to an Armenian Community who have gone to Armenia and had the same feeling, you know, being a part of an AGBU school and the community, it's definitely influenced my feeling but I think it's just more knowing how much our people have gone through and that we're still here that you feel like you feel that connection.

(3rd generation, Toronto, female)

The vast majority of my respondents have been to Armenia at least once, in some instances transforming their sense of Armenianness. Talin, who came to New York City at the age of three, sustains her ties with the community through AGBU and church youth groups. Talin travelled to Armenia for the first time during her AGBU internship and worked as a volunteer in social and humanitarian fields which paralleled her academic career and gave her important insights into how these services are delivered in Armenia. Talin explains how this experience influenced her future plans:

> I did as much as I could there, but I made a vow that I would go back and do more, so because we're talking about this now, I'm actually in the process of working with other Armenian occupational therapists and we want to do a conference in Armenia. So I want to go back for that as well. […]. We want to educate the therapists in Armenia to continue progressing in how they could help people with disabilities.

(2nd generation, New York City, female)

In addition, numerous diaspora organisations invest their time and energy in the diasporic communities' engagements with Armenia's prosperity, and individual encounters also influence participants' views on transferring knowledge from the diaspora through independent initiatives. These encounters also affect the status of the diasporic Armenians who visit the country. Second- and third-generation Armenian-American participants in diaspora networks and non-governmental organisations, such as Birthright Armenia and the Armenian Volunteer Corps[71] (AVC), have created what Darieva (2011,

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[71] The AVC is an Armenia-based, independent volunteer organisation founded in 2000 and accepted its first volunteers in 2001. The purpose of the organisation is to attract

pp.490-492) calls "a new form of diasporic interaction" and "new forms of cosmopolitan sensibilities". Increasingly, therefore, young diaspora members visiting Armenia do not regard themselves as "tourists". Darieva (2011, pp.492, 498) considers that the concept of return has thus been transformed into "modern 'ancestral return'" reflecting the transnational engagements of "Ottoman Armenians", who are not part of the "internal" diaspora composed of migrants from CIS countries (Kasbarian, 2015a, p.365).

Needless to say, growing up in the community and interacting with organisations increases the ties with the homeland physically and emotionally. Zepour, a second-generation, New York-Armenian, says that she had grown up within the ARF circle of the community and that most of her life revolved around being Armenian. She emphasises that she always prioritises her Armenian life over her American life. Zepour attended three internship programmes in Armenia and a camp in Georgia through different organisations and regards the reason for her strong attachment to the homeland as mostly related to growing up in the community. Even so, being actively engaged in the local and transnational spaces does not necessarily result in interacting with the homeland physically, or embracing Armenia as the home. This has more to do with the participants' geographical origins, dialects and eventually the local-diasporic channels through which the community members engage in transnational interactions. As an example, a diaspora member who might actively embrace Armenia as a homeland in different ways in the diaspora, such as taking part in political actions, taking part in fundraising events for supporting orphanages or educational centres for children in Armenia or attending career-orientated conferences and seminars in which Armenians from Armenia are participating, interacts with transnational social fields and feels a "sense of *moral co-responsibility*" (italics in original) (Werbner, 2002, pp.120, 129) for their ethic cognates around the world. In other words, he or she keeps 'one foot' in the 'homeland'. However, as was observed amongst some of the respondents, these involvements might not result in a direct link with Armenia beyond touristy visits.

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Armenians all over world aged 21 and over to serve in different sectors and organisations from education, finance, arts and culture to environmental sciences (Armenian Volunteer Corps, 2021).

Some respondents argue that Armenia should view the diaspora as more than a source of revenue. When I asked the participants about their opinion of the Ministry of Diaspora, which was founded in 2008 to act as a bridge between Armenia and the diaspora and abolished in a 2019 reform, those who had an idea about the Ministry stated that this governmental body is not efficient enough and that the Minister should be appointed from amongst diasporans rather than an Armenia-Armenian[72]. Some of the respondents think that the diaspora organisations which were involved in the creation and development of the diaspora understand the diaspora better and are more suited to formulating a policy, approach or strategy for creating 'synergy' between the diaspora and Armenia.

Participating in Armenia's development in the diaspora, mostly mediated by the organisations, might reinforce the idea of making a long-term agenda in and for Armenia, such as living in Armenia for half of the year at least or more, buying a house there, engaging in different projects and holding a passport. However, despite the desire to accomplish long-term projects in the homeland, the dominant trend in both communities is for emotional connection and physical exertion which need not be translated into embracing Armenia as a home or an act of repatriation. There is certainly those who plan to repatriate to the homeland amongst the respondents from the second-generation Armenians, but the vast majority of the community have no long-term plans for return other than living in Armenia for part of the year.

During my fieldwork, resonations of the Velvet Revolution in 2018, which started with anti-government protests led by Nikol Pashinyan and resulted in his election, were very promising for the economic and political stability of Armenia. Even though repatriations had already begun before Pashinyan was elected, the participants, except community leaders from the ARF circle who were wary of the echoes of the Revolution, in general, believed that the Revolution would have a positive impact on the diasporans' decisions

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[72] In 2019 Zareh Sinanyan was appointed to the reformed entity which responsible for homeland-diaspora relations as a High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs. Sinanyan, who was born in Armenia, migrated to the USA in late 1980s. (Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs, no date.b). In this regard, it can be argued that an Armenian who has knowledge about both Armenia and the diaspora is in that position today.

to move to Armenia. Nevertheless, when I compared this belief with my empirical data, I found that for most of the community members who felt at home in North America and enjoyed the social and economic conformity which especially the first-generation Armenians had worked hard to gain, return is not a serious option.

I will now move on to discuss the binary between home and homeland which affects interaction with Armenia in the long term.

### 7.2.2 "Where is homeland?": the binaries between home and homeland

Tölölyan (2012, p.10) expresses that most of the young generations of various ethnicities who would be prospective diasporic members in their country of residence, recognise the importance of "an ancestral homeland" and their "ethnodiasporic identity", but will not, however, completely recognise their diasporic identity bounded and subordinated by their homelands' "national and moral authority". As I previously pointed out, the manifestations of their affiliated, intersected and on occasions 'mashed-up' identities including ethnodiasporic ones require flexibility rather than being confined and mediated by the boundaries of homeland (Tölölyan, 2012, p.10; 2014). For the vast majority of the respondents, Armenia is an emotionally attached land that requires the time and efforts of diasporans to defend and sustain it. Malkki (1992, p.28) uses a metaphor of kinship such as "motherland and fatherland" which "suggest that each nation is a grand genealogical tree, rooted in the soil that nourishes it" and this kind of allegory cannot refer to being "part of more than one tree" which "evokes both temporal continuity of essence and territorial rootedness". However, it is hard for the majority of the participants, who have multiple cultural orientations and identities influenced by the dominant society, to relate physically to a specific geographic location. In other words, there is not necessarily a natural connection between the two. Besides different cultural components from those of traditional diaspora members which are dominant in my research, insufficient financial and career-driven opportunities hinder their physical commitments to the land. This leads the participants to make a distinction between home and homeland:

> My homeland is what I feel emotionally connected to, whereas my home here in the United States is what I feel physically connected to. I feel that I can create the best future, financially secure situation and career-wise the most secure position

for myself in the United States. I have advantages here such as my native command of American English and such and my education was here that I don't have in Armenia of those are not advantages in Armenia at that point. In fact not knowing Russian is a very big disadvantage in Armenia for me.

(Louisin, 2nd generation, New York City, female)

Storti (2001, p.3), who focuses on the familiarity and predictability of the constituent elements of 'home', defines home as "the place where you are known and trusted and where you know and trust others; where you are accepted, understood, indulged, and forgiven; a place of rituals and routine interactions, of entirely predictable events and people, and of very few surprises; the place where you belong and feel safe and secure and where you can accordingly trust your instincts, relax, and be yourself". Storti's definition associates not only physical locality but also connotes emotions and everyday practices. 'Home' which is described as a surrounding "where one best knows oneself' – where 'best' means 'most', even if not always 'happiest'", is also introduced as a "cognitive environment" by Rapport and Dawson (1998, pp.9-10):

> Being 'at home' and being 'homeless' are not matters of movement, of physical space, or of the fluidity of socio-cultural times and places, as such. One is at home when one inhabits a cognitive environment in which one can undertake the routines of daily life and through which one finds one's identity best mediated – and homeless when such a cognitive environment is eschewed.

Within my context, the authors distinguish an attachment to a surrounding as a home from its natural ethnic connection to a particular place or a specific territory. Ani, an Azerbaijan born-Armenian participant from New York, said that:

> I love Armenia and I can call it homeland, but I can't call it home. And the reason why is because I don't feel comfortable, home is somewhere you can be yourself and you don't have to pretend, that's what home is, where you're comfortable in your skin. [...]. Homeland is something that belongs to your ethnicity, and you know you have a country to go back to at any given point where everyone from your nation and your ethnicity lives, but home is where I feel comfortable, and where I feel comfortable definitely is New York. I can't be comfortable in Armenia because I don't agree with a lot of stuff like prejudice towards other people who are not Armenian, towards the Turkish people.

(1st generation, New York City, female)

Although there is a degree of belonging to the homeland, it is not enough to be accepted as a home for practical realities, living conditions or the socio-political context of the

country in which Ani feels isolated or alienated herself in this setting. Ani was born in a conflicted area in Azerbaijan and moved to different places to escape the war in 1988; after having lived as a refugee for a while, she moved back to Armenia with her parents. Armenia evokes the insulting memories to which she was exposed in her school days. She explained that her peers would make fun of her western dialect of the Armenian language which has some Turkish words, and they would call her 'TurkaHay'[73] implying that she is not Armenian enough. This is significantly relevant to the discussion in Chapter 5 regarding the boundaries of identity. The inclusion and exclusion forms of identity operationalise in the feeling of belonging to a place. Armenia represents a collective attachment in her mind but there is a cultural rupture to some extent in her belonging to the country. Ani is therefore not exactly able to accommodate herself to the country.

That Armenia which is described as a homeland in the participants' discourses, does not make some Armenians feel at home, as the extract above shows, is related to the extent to which a diasporic Armenian is integrated within the culture in the homeland. One of the second-generation participants from New York explains this estrangement as "The faces do not look like me". More than half of the community members underline the importance of dialect for being engaged in Armenia. Some of them state that differences in dialect do not lead to any significant problem during encounters of diasporans with Armenians in Armenia. A couple of participants give importance to an excellent command of language which facilitates communication.

Their cultural background experiences, which manifest themselves in their self-identification and performing the identity, hinder the building of a concrete 'home' in the homeland. Armenia is, for some of the respondents, emotionally home. The idea of disconformity with the local people, and its concomitant possibility of a sense of isolation from the Hayastantsis provide an insightful explanation of why some of the members made a distinction between home and homeland. Also, one of the salient reasons for the

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[73] The expression TurkaHay was used to describe the Armenians coming from Turkey or Azerbaijan as a derogatory term by some community members in the diaspora and some Hayastantsis in Armenia.

respondents not to prefer to live in Armenia is its living standards and bureaucratic barriers on daily basis. Seda, another second-generation participant from New York who had gone to Armenia every summer for ten years, mostly to be a volunteer in humanitarian activities, summarises the differences which she noticed as follows:

> They are very nonchalant about everything. It's not as pressing as it is for us here. If like I have something to do whether it's, I don't know, write a report or organize an event, I do it and I get it done. But in Armenia, they are very relaxed. They take their time, "We'll do it tomorrow".
>
> (2nd generation, New York City, female)

Even though the diasporans' general view of the locals is very positive, I also listened to their negative experiences with the Hayatastantsis. The common experience is a feeling of being financially abused due to the belief that as a second-generation Armenian from the USA,

> [L]ike, drivers will take advantage of you. You are a tourist, you don't have their accent, so they think you come from money.
>
> (Zepour, 2nd generation, New York City, female).

The disconnection between the diaspora and Armenia to some degree is reflected in the interaction with the locals. Most of the first-generation Armenians in my study had travelled to Armenia as tourists, mostly with their families. The second- and third-generation participants' engagements are either through organisations for humanitarian and educational purposes or individual tourist visits with a couple of friends or their families. In addition to those who went for a short-term holiday, some of the second-generation respondents who attended the programmes of the diaspora organisations in Armenia state that they mostly spent most of the time with other diasporic Armenians who were not born or raised in Armenia. Even though they felt comfortable while interacting with locals as time went by, most of them, but not all, still preferred the environment in which they are best situated to socialise. Fittante (2017, pp.150, 161) studied North American returnees who had spent at least three years in the homeland and found that the participants felt very connected to Armenia but at the same time disengaged from the locals, and they had mostly socialised with fellow diasporic people since they did not prioritise integration into the country. Fittante (2017, p.161) describes

this as a "connection without engagement". In other words, although there are some exceptions, American returnees create their own 'homes' in the homeland by building "bubbles" which encompassed their cultural affinities.

### 7.2.3 Exceptions

There are also some exceptional cases that stand out from the majority of the respondents in terms of how they express a feeling of belonging to a specific location. These examples can be divided into four categories: (1) those who have constructed an Armenian identity strongly orientated towards the homeland, (2) those who regard the host country as a homeland by not making a distinction between home and homeland, (3) those who regard their birthplace as their homeland, and (4) those whose belonging to home or homeland are shaped around a familiar group of people rather than a specific place.

The respondents in the first category prioritise Armenia as a constituent element of their Armenian identity. The fact that Armenia takes a central position in the Armenian identity as a homeland is mostly reproduced by the initiatives of family and political affiliations of the members or their families. Vahan, who frequently goes to Armenia and thinks of repatriation, summarises the centrality of homeland in his Armenian identity with these words:

> [O]n a personal level, I can say that Armenia has been central to my Armenian identity because from a very young age I was taken to Armenia by my parents like on a family trip and from that first trip when I was 12 years old, I think I was very attached to the country.
>
> (2nd generation, Toronto, male)

Vahan states that he also has an attachment to the host country where he was born and raised, but says firmly that a homeland for him is Armenia itself within its current borders. But for him, it also goes beyond that to where his grandparents were born, which is historical Armenia, which he describes as "ancestral lands". Likewise, Levon states that he prefers to live with his own country's conditions even if they are disadvantageous for many Armenians:

> My home is Armenia. Although my birthplace is Lebanon and I grew up in Lebanon, my homeland is Armenia. I feel at home there. Everybody speaks

Armenian. I feel comfortable. I think our weak sheep is better than others' strong lions.

(1st generation, Toronto, male)

The common point of these examples is the optimism for the economic future of the country since they regard it as a relatively young and developing country that offers opportunities for people who can bring in new experiences. They state that they do not see any sharp difference between their cultures and the culture in Armenia and that they enjoy the lifestyle over there to the degree which builds a 'home' there. Some of them own a house in Armenia for their long-term plans.

The definition of the country of residence as homeland is not a very common articulation that I encounter in the excerpts from the interviews. Apart from those who declare that they have two homelands (in some cases more, including historical Armenia), namely the host country and Armenia, I noticed that those who state that their homeland is their country of residence do not distinguish between the terms 'home' and 'homeland'. For example, Vartuhi who is an activist in the AIWA along with other diaspora organisations states that:

> [The homeland] is I think here in Boston. Not Armenia. Although I'm Armenian, right? Well, I haven't spent time there, you know three visits doesn't make my homeland. Do I think there's an importance of supporting it? Yes, I do because I think my grandparents, their parents suffered a lot. So, I do support Armenia, but I don't consider that to be my homeland. I spent so little time there that it would be a phony if I thought that was my homeland. I spent more time in China and India and South Africa in 30 years than in Armenia. So yeah, I'm an atypical Armenian and I don't think I'm the typical Armenian.

(2nd generation, Boston, female)

> My homeland will be where my family are from, Istanbul I suppose. I have never been to Istanbul. But we don't have any family in Armenia, I have never been there, my parents have never been there. To be honest, my homeland is, I would say it's here, here in America. But like I feel Istanbul is closer to our family than Yerevan because we don't have any family there.

(Ara, 2nd generation, New York City, male)

In terms of emotional attachment, Ara felt that he belonged more to Istanbul than Yerevan in terms of familial relations. Ara is a very active participant in the community and engaged in transnational networks through professional organisations to help Armenians

all over the world, including Armenia. He expresses that he prioritises the nation rather than a particular place.

The minority of respondents define their and their ancestors' birthplace as their homeland. In this regard, there is no generational limitation. For example, most of the Bolsahays from the first- and second-generation in the USA do not have a deeper connection to Armenia in the meaning of 'homeland' even though they acknowledge that their homeland is Armenia in essence. The essentialist approach does not correspond to their emotional attachment to adopt it as a homeland:

> I regard my homeland as Turkey since I was born there.
>
> (Miran, 1st generation, Toronto, male)

The final group refers to those whose emotional attachment to a place is shaped by the familiar people around them. Such an affective dimension of place attachment leads to plural homeland understandings in some community members' minds. For example, Hagop from New York does not find it sensible to have one homeland, although he states that he feels that he belongs to Armenia and often goes there:

> I don't really feel like you need to have one homeland. Just the same way that when I was feeling very bad, when I was a teenager, I would often go to my best friend's house. He lived in one town away from me. […]. To me, that was home. Now, I don't see why you need to have one home. I never understood that. I think it can happen [to have] 17 homes. Maybe that's too much, but you can have multiple homes. I love being in New York so much and I love being in Armenia so much. I will say that when I'm in Armenia, I don't feel homesick. I don't get homesick for being in New York. When I'm in New York, I do get homesick for being in Armenia. I do miss being in Armenia. […]. I belong more to Armenia, not by a lot, but a small amount, but definitely more.
>
> (2nd generation, New York City, male)

Although he feels that he belongs to Armenia a bit more than the country he lives in, his emotional attachment to more than one place "invokes the ideas of "plurilocal home" which builds a connection between "here" and "there" (Waite and Cook, 2011, p.241). Some participants identify themselves with a particular group of people with whom they share the same sense of belonging. For example, Alin, who have a long-term plan for Armenia says:

> I don't feel I belong to any land *per se* like physical land, but I belong more to people, I feel. So for me, it's my people which I count as Armenians to my people, but I am not limited to any geographic location. Wherever Armenians are, I care about that region. It could be Armenia, it could be diaspora.

(1st generation, New York City, female)

In this group, there are also some individuals whose attachment to Armenia is conditioned by the existence of people who are familiar to them. For example, Avo, a second-generation Armenian in Toronto, says that he feels at home when he goes to Armenia since he has family members and cousins there. In addition, there is a widespread assumption that the culture which dominates the western diaspora, which has risen with the recent migration of Syrian Armenians to Armenia, would transform the cultural face of Armenia and attract the diaspora to the country.

### 7.2.4 Longing for the 'lost' homeland, for 'lost' origins

The final classification of place attachment amongst the respondents is historic Armenia (part of Greater Armenia), which corresponds to a "cognitive and emotional space" (Svašek, 2002, p.515) evoked by diasporans' collective memory. Kasbarian (2015a, pp.359-360) states that the lost lands of historic Armenia are restricted to the "spiritual, mythical realm" for the diasporans, and provide a ground for unity and the construction of identity. Panossian (1998, p.184) states that after independence, the cohesiveness which is based on the 'lost land' as an origin of the community is replaced by the Republic of Armenia, referring to the country of all nations, "except in the rhetoric of the more extreme nationalist". An attachment to lost lands exists symbolically in the minds of all the diasporans in this study as a critical reference to Armenian identity and as an extension of the Armenian Cause evoked by the elites and institutions in the diaspora. Within this categorisation, I refer to a small proportion of Armenians who first attached themselves to historic Armenia by stressing their cultural affinities deriving from the region when I asked them where their homeland is. Their prompt response does not mean that they do not see Armenia as a homeland, but by 'historic Armenia' they merge the cultures of a 'genuine' and a symbolic homeland.

The 'symbolic homeland', in this sense, refers to a desirable place and a territory in which one can find the origins of the Armenian identity which was destroyed by a traumatic

event that marked "the life of each individual, group, community or global society […] as a historic turning point" (Cavalli, 2004, p.116). Armenians regard the calamity of 1915 as a decisive moment, which uprooted "the origin of the tree" of the Armenian people from their ancestral lands. Nevertheless, as one of the Toronto-Armenians said, "there is still spirit in that soil that lives there" for them. Malkki (1992, p.29) describes the usage of kindred concepts of nation and culture as "metaphysical", and states that they are "spatializing and territorializing" and depend on cultural essentialism which is in accord with the arborescent forms described in her article. In this sense "culture has for long been conceived as something in "soil"" (Malkki, 1992, p.29). Armen, a second-generation Toronto-born Armenian, speaks of the cultural continuity between the ancestral lands and the Armenian identity:

> When we teach about history, we teach about homeland and culture whatever it may be, our understanding is [that] Western Armenia is considered to be including Armenia today [which] is our homeland, currently the borders of our homeland internationally accepted is what Armenia is, but we believe that Armenia including the diaspora has to support the reestablishment of Western Armenia as a part of the Armenian homeland, because the roots of a lot of the culture and language stem from what is now not a part of Armenia, and I don't think there was anyone that would say that Armenia is not our homeland, Western Armenia is, but more so than Greater Armenia is what Armenia our homeland is, and Armenians should always be playing an official part and demanding our rightful territories to be returned to Armenia proper, and that has varying degrees of reason; one is because of personal properties that exist there in which not the majority would be able to have or know or say which is, what the *tapu* [deed] is and whatever exists, but with regards to cultural sites and religious sites that exist there, that is a very integral part of our understanding of where we were, we came from, where we practised and what we practised, not just physical existence, but actually natural spaces, rivers and lakes and mountains and hills, spaces of this sort as well. You know, in the Aboriginal understanding in Canada, for example, wisdom sits in places. These were the places where our wisdom sat and when we were pulled from these places along with that we left behind the places where we practised these things, and it was a huge, in my opinion, very huge, the biggest harm beyond the physical harm. The next comes the degree of loss of culture that we endured from not being able to be on that land where ethnocultural oral history, history practices and knowledge was all left behind, and that's I think a tremendous loss.
>
> (2nd generation, Toronto, male)

Armen's articulation of the homeland here corresponds to the "autochthony" of cultures which is rooted in the soil: "just as there are certain culture-beds for certain microscopic

animals, certain types of soil for certain plants, so there is a certain part of the soul in everyone and certain ways of thought and action communicated from one person to another which can only exist in a national setting, and disappear when a country is destroyed" (Weil, 1987, pp.151-152, cited in Malkki, 1992, pp.30-31). This reflects a perspective regarding the narratives of the lost territory and its culture identified with the descendants of survivors, namely western diaspora members. This is one of the dimensions which politicises the Armenian identity.

Brah (1997, p.193) makes a distinction between "'feeling at home'" and "staking claim to a place as one's own". The narratives of the participants about their belonging to a place are in line with the idea of "*multi-locationality* across territorial, cultural and psychic boundaries" (Brah, 1997, p.194). So it does not seem possible to tie the belonging of people to a particular place which leads them to be "*incarcerated*, or confined, in those places" (Appadurai, 1988, p.37). The majority of the second- and later generation participants do not have any life experience in Armenia for the long term, but they nevertheless recognise Armenia as their solid, ethnic territory which enables them to continue the Armenian identity as much as the first-generation participants do. Regardless of the generational differences, the majority of the participants feel comfortable with where they live and think that the host countries give them an environment in which they can express their identities freely and which they call home. In line with Anthias (2006, p.21), the belonging, in this context, is about "the ways in which social place has resonances with stability of the self, on with feelings of being part of a larger whole and with the emotional and social bonds that are related to such places". The complexities and 'multi-placedness' regarding homeland which I try to reflect in this section are not only related to cultural differences between Armenia and the diasporic groups in the study but also stem from the heterogeneous nature of the communities themselves.

In the next section, I will concentrate on the political dimension of place-making in the process of constructing Nagorno-Karabakh (or *Artsakh* in its Armenian naming) as a homeland for the Armenian diaspora community and its place in Armenian long-distance nationalism.

## 7.3   Reasserting the nation-state: making 'Artsakh' a part of Armenia

The ethnonational conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the Autonomous region (formerly Oblast) of Nagorno-Karabakh, which started with the struggle of Karabakh Armenians[74] for their self-determination in 1988, has a significant influence on the national sentiments of not only Armenians in the region but also in the diaspora. The engagement of the region in the "process of nation-state building" in the post-Soviet era led to the region having "unresolved legal problem in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) area" with its "*de-facto* micro-state" status as a part of Republic of Armenia (Panossian, 2001, p.143). In this section, I will analyse how this conflict, which is relatively new for the Armenians in the diaspora, influences Armenians' identities and how they relate this specific territory to their allegiances. It can be argued that this ethnic conflict politicises the Armenian identity in the diaspora since it is considered as a "continuation of the genocide" by the vast majority of the respondents. Therefore, their sense of belonging to Nagorno-Karabakh can be seen as a struggle for existence for the interviewees involved in this current study. In this regard, the respondents' attachment to this region is mostly shaped by long-distance nationalism (Anderson, 1998).

In this subsection, I will explore how the respondents' sense of belonging is formed towards the region as part of Armenia and how the region is constructed as the *Republic of Artsakh* in their attachments. I will first present a brief history of the conflict to explain Armenian claims over the territory and then analyse its significant role in the Armenian national identity leaning on the excerpts from the interviewees' responses. I will also show how their articulations are connected to the collective traumas of 1915. Finally, I will discuss the ways in which the respondents engaged in collective action on behalf of their homeland, Artsakh. This orientation towards the region, which is largely political, can be regarded as less complex than the context of the relationship between the Republic

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[74] Tölölyan, (2007b, pp.115, 127n17) considers Karabakh Armenians as an "intra-state diaspora" which is different from a transnational diaspora in that the notion itself refers to people who live outside of their homeland, but within the borders of the empire that governs them.

of Armenia and community members in the study due to the fact that their attachment lies strongly in a struggle for the national existence.

### 7.3.1 The historical background of the conflict region

Nagorno-Karabakh is an historically disputed territory in the South Caucasus which is now the focus of a present-day conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Tchilingirian (1999, p.436) states that the "toponym which means 'black garden' has been used since the 13th century". In Armenian history, Tchilingirian (1999, p.436) states that the earliest record which shows that this territory was part of Armenia can be dated back to the second century BC. The region, named Artsakh, was the tenth of the fifteen "provinces" of the Kingdom of Armenia (Dedeyan, 2015, p.35; Hewsen, 1997, p.15). After the division of Armenia in 387 AD between the Byzantine and Persian Empires, Artsakh became part of the Caucasian Albania as an unrecognised "political entity" (Hewsen, 2001, p.102), and this continued until the seventh century AD when it came under the control of Arab overlords (Tchilingirian, 1999, p.437). The Turkish Seljuk dynasty in the eleventh century ruled some parts of the region which were first Islamised and then Turkified, whereas the western part of Albania which was dominated by Armenians remained Christian (Tchilingirian, 1999, p.437). In the eighteenth century, the region was under Persian rule as independent Armenian entities, but after its annexation by the Russian Empire in 1805, the Karabakh region was linked to the Caspian province and then to the Russian Empire's Elizavetpol province by "separating Karabagh administratively from Yerevan province" (Suny and Stork 1988, p.37).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Transcaucasia bore witness to bloody clashes between Armenians and Azerbaijanis (who were called Tatars[75] by the Russians at that time). The war between the two ethnic groups in 1905-1906 partly resulted from social and economic differences between the Armenians who had higher social status, and the Azeris, who were less-educated and "unskilled field workers in the oil industry" (Suny and Stork, 1988, p.38; Bölükbaşı, 2001, p.43). Following the Russian Revolution of 1917

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[75] Tölölyan (1995, p.94) states that "the application of 'Tatar' to Turkish people is a misnomer before the consolidation of Azeri identity".

and the political vacuum created by the withdrawal of the Russian Tsarist Army from the South Caucasus, the Transcaucasian Commissariat was established in November 1917, followed by the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic that included Georgian, Azerbaijani, and Armenian delegates on April 22, 1918; however, the Federation was dissolved with the Georgians' declaration of independence on May 26, 1918, followed by Azerbaijanis' and Armenians' independence declarations (Panossian, 2006, p.243).

The conflict over Karabakh between Armenians and Azeris continued throughout the twentieth century. The ethnic clash in 1905-1906 was followed by the movement of Turkish forces across eastern Transcaucasia because of disagreement over the treaty of Brest-Litovsk (1918), which concluded in the defeat of the Baku Muslims with three thousand Muslim volunteers killed (Gökay, 1998, p.36).[76] Suny (1993, p.124) points out that Pan-Turkic[77] ambitions were the main impetus behind the advance of the Turkish forces into Transcaucasia in March 1918. This discourse is still valid for the respondents in the research and frequently attributed to Turkish supports for Azeris in the region.

The first Assembly of Armenians of Karabakh convened in August 1918 and announced its independent government by rejecting Turkish authority over Karabakh, but Turkish forces took Baku in the name of Azerbaijani Republic and regained control of the region (Suny, 1972, p.337; Tchilingirian, 1999, p.440). This meant a new conflict for both parties. Suny and Stork (1988, p.38; cf. Walker, 1980, p.261) state that the Azerbaijanis "avenged the "March Days" by massacring about 20,000 Armenians" in September 1918. Finally, British forces filled the lacuna in the region created by the dissolution of the Ottoman empire. Tölölyan (1995, p.95) states that during the next two years, the demand of Armenians and Azeris for Karabakh to be affiliated with their territories continued and

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[76] For further detail on the conflicts, see Suny, 1972. The "Baku October": the "March Days", in: *The Baku commune, 1917-1918: class and nationality in the Russian revolution*, pp.214-233, and Gökay, B. 1998. *The Battle for Baku*.

[77] Pan-Turkism was an ideology which developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Its main objective was to unite culturally or physically or both all people of Turkish descent provenly or allegedly who were living "both within and without the frontiers of the Ottoman Empire (subsequently of the Republic of Turkey)" (Landau, 1995, p.1).

that created a hesitation of the British and post-Tzarist forces in the region. It can be argued that this hesitation resulted in Azeris' favour with the appointment of the former Minister of Defense of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic to Karabakh as a provisional governor by the British forces in 1919. Walker (1996, p.99) points out that for the Armenians, this appointment was considered a "continuation of the genocide perpetrated by the Ittiadists in 1915".

Ethnic tensions, therefore, did not come to an end, mainly in Shusha/Shushi,[78] with many casualties on the Armenian side, although they reluctantly had to accept "provisional inclusion" (Walker, 1996, p.100; Chorbaijan, 2001, p.25; Mutafian, 1994, p.125). After having entered the area and established a new Soviet government in Baku in April 1920, the Bolsheviks took control of the Republic of Armenia on 2 December 1920 (Panossian, 2006, pp.245-246), and by spring 1921 it had become Sovietised as Azerbaijan and Georgia (Tchilingirian, 1999, p.440). Libaridian (1988, pp.33-34) refers to a declaration issued by the Baku Soviets in Azerbaijan on 1 December 1920 which states that Karabakh, Nakhichevan and Zangezur, which were disputed territories, were part of the Armenian Republic, which was never enforced although supported by Stalin, and that "Karabagh and Nakhichevan were once again part of the Soviet Azerbaijani Republic".

Nagorno-Karabakh, which in modern history has never been part of Armenia administratively, became the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast as a part of the Soviet Azerbaijani Republic in 1923 (Panossian, 2001, p.144). The significance of the enclave lay in its potential to serve as a bridge between Muslim Eastern Transcaucasia and Turkey (Swietochowski, 1985, p.143, cited in Tchilingirian, 1999, p.441). The Armenian population of the region (which formed over 90% of the inhabitants in the early 1920s and decreased to 75% in 1979) expressed their discontent[79] deriving from

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[78] Hence Shushi/Shusha became an intensely Azerbaijani town until 1992 (Donabedian and Mutafian, 1989, pp.51 and 98-99, cited in Walker, 1996, p.100). On 10 May 1992, the Armenians took control of the city (de Waal, 2003, p.179). The city today is located in the region of Nagorno-Karabakh and governed by Azerbaijan as of 8 November 2020.

[79] Tölölyan (1995, p.96) describes one of them as follows: "For NKAO Armenians, travel to and from Armenia (where many went to study) was made difficult; investments in

their economic, socio-cultural and political grievances in Karabakh to the central authorities by means of non-violent protests, letters and petitions in 1929 and 1930-1935 during Khandjian's period as party secretary in Yerevan, and in the mid-1960s, 1977 and 1987, and wanted the retrocession of the region to Armenia (Tölölyan, 1995, pp.97-98; Tchilingirian, 1999, p.442; Panossian, 2001, p.144; Walker, 1996, pp.102-103).

Following the demand of the Armenians of Karabakh for a resolution transferring the region to the Armenian SSR, in the atmosphere of Gorbachev's *glasnost* (openness) policy, there was again the tension between the two groups in February 1988. The USSR Supreme Soviet intervened in the dispute and made a decision in favour of Azerbaijan after the resolution was rejected by the Supreme Soviet of Azerbaijan and "a 'counter-resolution'" of the Supreme Soviet of Armenia, which approved the integration of Nagorno-Karabakh into the Armenian SSR, and it remained officially under the jurisdiction of Azerbaijan until the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 (Panossian, 2001, pp.144-145). Subsequently, the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh[80] emerged as an independent state in 1992, although not officially recognised by the international community, including Armenia itself (Panossian, 2001, p.146). In other words, as Koinova (2011, p.349) indicates, the victory of Armenians in Karabakh did not bring about Karabakh's international status.

Koinova (2011, p.334) states that diasporas are triggered to become involved in homeland politics when significant abuses of human rights occur against their co-ethnics in the homeland and local actors lose confidence in their ability to complete the secession objective. Koinova (2011) discusses the influence of Albanian, Armenian and Chechen diasporas on the respective secessionist movements of Kosovo, Karabakh and Chechnya. Koinova (2011, p.343) states that "to redress past injustices" is a common motivation for these cases to support secessionist movements, and adds "Armenians were anchored in

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road-building, light industry and agriculture were directed away from Armenian areas of the NKAO".

[80] According to news in the Armenian Weekly (Weekly Staff, 2017), with the constitutional referendum in 2017 in Nagorno-Karabakh, the name of the *de facto* state changed to the Republic of Artsakh.

the 1915 genocide". The conflict tensed relations with Turkey over its support for Azerbaijan and resulted in economic suffering for Armenians in Armenia due to Azerbaijani and Turkish blockades. Although a ceasefire was in place with the mediation of Russia in May 1994, the conflict was frozen but the political feud remained unresolved (de Waal, 2003, p.251). Several initiatives to determine the political status of the region were unsuccessful. The failure to establish a permanent peace in the region created instability for the future of the people living there and a relatively new identity focus for the Armenian diaspora in general.

The fragile ceasefire was violated several times in 2008, 2014 and 2016 and the clashes caused a great number of military and civilian fatalities on both sides. Finally, a flare-up outside Nagorno-Karabakh, which was thought to be the most serious conflict since the war in the region in April 2016, started on 12 July 2020 (Efimova, 2020). This latest crisis brought about collective movements in the Armenian populated cities in North America. Social media were effectively used to mobilise Armenians in the USA and Canada who were politically and culturally heterogeneous in each community. There is a social media account of almost every organisation or institution which actively functions in the diaspora. Tölölyan (2007b, p.111) points out that one of the things which enables the diaspora to be imagined as a "single entity" is "transnational forms of discourse" circulating on the internet "between elites and institutions". When the war broke out in late September, one example of social media's success was the high level of participation of Armenians in protests organised in New York City and Toronto, as well as other Armenian-populated cities in these two countries. Along with jointly organised protests and rallies, community leaders asked Armenians to control the narrative that was released in the media and to post and tweet with hashtags to reference the content, allowing it to circulate easily on social media. For example, #ArtsakhStrong,[81] #RecognizeArtsakh and #PeaceforArmenians are some of the hashtags re-generated in the most recent crisis. Moreover, special fundraising events were organised to be spent on humanitarian and medical assistance. Finally, the size of the donations raised by the Hayastan All-

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[81] Adrians (2017, p.17) notes that the hashtag '#ArtsakhStrong' was launched by the Armenian Youth Federation.

Armenian Fund's 'We Are Our Borders' campaign is striking. The campaign started with a press release about the Fund on 27 September 2020 when the recent war started, with a joint call to action which was "made by the President of the Republic of Armenia and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Fund, Armen Sarkissian, members of the Board of Trustees including the President of the Republic of Artsakh, Catholicos of All Armenians and Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia" (Hayastan All-Armenian Fund, 2020; MassisPost, 2020). As of January 2021, the funds raised had reached more than US$170 million (Hayastan All-Armenian Fund, no date.b). That the donations reached such a significant amount is evidence of the high level of mobilisation of Armenian nationalism in the diaspora.

This long-standing war also evokes the diasporic Armenians' past intergenerational trauma of the forced exile from their ancestral lands. As Tölölyan (2007b, p.120) points out, "in Armenia, the genocide matters a great deal, but the dangers to Karabagh are not primarily envisaged in those terms, whereas a form of "never again" (whether realistic or not) continues to underpin many diasporic Armenians' commitment to Karabagh". So as Tölölyan (2007b, p.120) stresses, this rhetoric based on the "fearful analogy" is still predominant amongst the Armenian communities as an indispensable identity component.

## 7.3.2 Nagorno-Karabakh in the diasporic articulation: "We Are Our Mountains"

The political connotation of belonging to Nagorno-Karabakh first appears in the name used by my respondents to identify the region. The community members prefer to call the region by its Armenian medieval toponym, 'Artsakh', which was replaced by the word 'Karabakh' whose usage can be found in the fourteenth century (de Waal, 2003, p.8). The respondents who preferred 'Artsakh' when talking about the region did not seem to know the etymology of either Artsakh or Karabakh. Their only motivation for using the word Artsakh seems to be its Armenian origin, because for them 'Karabakh' connotes negative emotions implying Azeri or Turkish control over the place. The participants also prefer to use Armenian names of the places which used to be in historic Armenia:

We don't call it Nagorno-Karabakh. So it's going to be funny to you. But the parts where you were born, we would never call it Eastern Turkey, we would say Western Armenia. "She was born in Dikranagerd, oh, she is an Armenian"; I think like that. Or somebody tells me about Van [a city in Eastern Turkey], I say it's Armenian or Akhtamar, I think of course it is Armenia, Tamar [referring to Akhtamar Island in Van] is an Armenian name. I don't separate that part.

(Ani, 1st generation, New York City, female)

Place-naming or (re)naming of settlements or regions appears as a practice of nation-building as well as an administrative requirement of the governmental bodies in the country in question. Ghulyan (2021, p.261) explores the place (re)naming with the geography of nation-state-building based on his analysis of 27,987 geographical names, their registrations and the changes between 2006 and 2018. Ghulyan (2021, pp.258, 273) takes Saparov's (2003) analysis which focuses on the place-naming practices resulting from the national revivalism after the 1950s in the Armenian SSR one step further and considers the place-naming as a practice of creating an "abstract space" aims at homogenising the space in question with an insightful application of the notion of Lefebvre (1991, cited in Ghulyan, 2021) of "abstract space" to the changes in names of places in the recent decades. In the renaming practices in Armenia in recent decades, the autochthonous assertions of a particular group of people for a given territory stand out (Ghulyan, 2021, p.274). Hence, the Republic of Artsakh is comprehended as a place that belongs to the Armenians whose ancestors were the indigenous inhabitants of the territory. The replacement of the Armenian toponyms referring to Turkish with those referring to Armenians can be considered a good example of the Armenianisation practices of the space in Armenia (Ghulyan, 2021, pp.258-259). Ghulyan (2021, p.265) draws attention to the fact that "Armenian toponyms that contain references to other ethnic or religious groups (Russians, Georgians, Kurds and others) were generally left intact, or if changed, the reference to them was retained". The elimination of the Turkic-origin names of the places shows that Turkic origin is a founding *other* in the nationalist sentiment of the Armenian identity.[82]

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[82] A contradictory point between the Armenians' envisagement of Karabakh and their articulation in their everyday life should be noted. Ghulyan (2020) draws attention to difference between abstract space and representational space by stating that "the word

The claim of the indigenousness of Karabakh endorses the belonging of the respondents to the region and also enables the community members to visualise the territory as part of Greater Armenia, whose borders includes Eastern Turkey, Nakhichevan and the Javakhk region of Georgia as well as Karabakh. Sona, who was born and raised in Syria and went to Karabakh several times after she had moved to Canada, describes her emotional attachment to the territory:

> I think Artsakh resembles more the Armenia that our grandparents told us about. My grandfather came from Sasun, and it's a mountainous area. So that's why Artsakh was very close to me, Artsakh is mountainous too. Topography, geography does like... Like it was the Armenia I was told about and the stories and the *fedayee* stories[83] where they would hide in, you know, all this I heard like I visualized everything there. Nature was like that.

<div align="right">(Sona, 1st generation, Toronto, female)</div>

Sasun/Sassoun (a district of Batman city in Eastern Turkey) mentioned in this extract was one of the main centres of the Armenian national resistance against the Turks in the nineteenth century. As the extract clearly shows, the link with the ancestral land and heroic narratives is reproduced in the diaspora. So the preference for the name Artsakh for the region is a conscious and ideological choice which makes the region part of a bigger narrative on which the national identity is based.

The name 'Artsakh' is largely preferred by the participants regardless of their demographic characteristics, but the first-generation Armenians from Turkey are an exception to this generalisation; they knowingly or unknowingly use the name 'Karabakh', mainly Turkish-speaking immigrants in both research sites. On the other

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'Artsakh' is used by the institutions on the state level, media, elites in Armenia and Republic of Artsakh, and it is conceived as abstract space; whereas people of Armenia and Karabakh use the word 'Karabakh' in their everyday lives". Ghulyan (2020) gives an example: "When the families of the soldiers who did or still do their military services in Karabakh are asked this question of where their son does his military service, they will definitely answer 'in Karabakh'. If you ask the same questions to the soldiers, even if 'Defense Army of Republic of Artsakh' is written on their military identity card, their answer will be the same - 'in Karabakh'".

[83] The participant here is referring the Armenian freedom fighters' stories in the nineteenth century.

hand, they see the region as part of Armenia, as do the majority of their descendants although many of them have not yet visited Karabakh. It can be said that 60% of the participants in Toronto have been to Karabakh at least once. One of the diaspora activists from Toronto states that there is an increased interest in Artsakh from the younger generation in the diaspora and adds that "whoever goes to Armenia, they make a point of visiting Artsakh". The sense of belonging to Karabakh reinforces the belonging to Armenia for the respondents. Karabakh, regarded as a conflicted part of Armenia, resurrects the Armenian identity in the diaspora. The capture of the seven regions around Karabakh by Armenians in the early 1990s represents a significant victory in their history and becomes a symbol that constitutes the Armenian identity of which Armenians are proud. One of the active members in the Armenian community underlines the importance of Karabakh in Armenian identity:

> Artsakh is currently still at war technically; basically, a ceasefire that was signed means that there's an existential threat there or there's an existential problem there. Artsakh was, I believe, a victory for the Armenian people after many years of not having victories. Especially considering the fact that it was an historical Armenian piece of land that was illegally given by the dictator Stalin. Now from what I've heard, what I've read, and what I've been exposed to those years during the Artsakh war is that the diaspora was more united and was more connected to the homeland than ever before.

(Vahan, 2nd generation, Toronto, male)

More than half of the second-generation Armenians in Toronto had visited Karabakh. This proportion is rather less amongst the interviewees except for the community leaders in the research conducted in the USA. In general, communities' engagements in the region are in humanitarian support arranged by the organisations in the diaspora. Fundraising is the most salient form of involvement to improve the conditions of local people there, protect cultural property and provide social services which enable the Karabakh Armenians to access their fundamental human rights. Sarkis describes the development of Karabakh after the atrocities of the war in his personal everyday life experience:

> I've been personally knocked down a million times, but one thing that I realized is if I'm able to stand back up and make the most of what I have, I start to rebuild anyway. I think that we need to fight for certain things. [...]. There's a lot of rebuilding, a lot of cultures that need to be reinstilled in these people like I'm

talking like human principles that have to be reinstilled in these people. There's a lot of work to do. We have what we have…

(Sarkis, 2ⁿᵈ generation, New York City, male)

Nevertheless, in general terms, in the perception of the respondents, the Karabakh war is primarily formed by the narratives of 1915 deportations, as Chernobrov and Wilmers (2020) insightfully observed amongst new Armenian generations in their research. They (2020, p.921) stated that "memories of the genocide are closely intertwined with those of the more recent Karabakh war of the 1990s" after qualitative research conducted in France, the United Kingdom and Russia. The general tendency of all generations living in New York and Toronto is similar but not identical; their link to Karabakh is mostly based on the emotion that they no longer want to sacrifice what they used to have:

It feels like sort of a continuation of not the genocide, but you know just the continuation of this like hostility. I mean with Azeri people. I guess it's something that, you know, we lost so much and this is something that is ours, but it's not. But it's not like we completely lost it, so I think it's like they're trying to still keep it.

(Lena, 2ⁿᵈ generation, New York, female)

Karabakh plays a very serious role in the identity of Armenians. Armenians have always withdrawn until today, but enough is enough now. Those who did not even speak Armenian and had never seen Armenia went to fight in Karabakh from this country.

(Artun, 1ˢᵗ generation, New York City, male)

This interpretation of the Karabakh conflict by Artun emerges as an existential problem for the Armenians in the diaspora and also in Armenia. Solving the Karabakh problem in favour of Armenians is a vital issue for the diasporic Armenian identity, as is similarly echoed by Aras:

We first learned about the existence of Karabakh when the conflicts occurred in the late 1980s. Before that, we did not even know where the region was. We learned about the history of the region and that the majority of the population was Armenian in the region. We wanted to help them to preserve their presence in the region. We thought that if we did not support this and prevent the loss of Karabakh, there would be a second genocide. We [as first-generation Armenians] are obsessive about the genocide; we have not been able to overcome those great traumas, we have not thrown the victim psychology off us. We did not have the opportunity to protect ourselves in 1915, but this time history gave us an

opportunity, and we are doing our best. When the people of Karabakh triumphed against Azerbaijan, we were revitalized.

(1st generation, Toronto, male)

The approach of Armenian diaspora members towards the conflict can be related to the characteristic of the 'victim diaspora'. Libaridian (1991, p.2) states that "the Genocide, its exploitation, and its denial by Turkey have paralyzed the collective psyche of the Armenian people. A nation of victims – at first, of violence, and subsequently of its denial – is incapable of sustaining a rational discourse. A nation cannot imagine a future if the only thing it can imagine the future bringing is further victimization. The denial of the future justifies the denial of the present and mandates an obsessive treatment of an overburdened past". It is obvious that insights about the Karabakh war arouse the existential fear of the Armenians which is embedded in their vivid collective 'post-memory' (Hirsch, 2008).

Because the Karabakh conflict is seen as a continuation of the extermination of the Armenians, the military superiority in the region which was gained in 1992 in favour of the Armenians helped the diaspora to heal. Panossian (2001, p.146) describes the spring of 1992 as a "turning point" for the Armenians due to the fact they began to establish their control over the region. That, as Aras stated, serves as the critical point for the Armenians to prove themselves by saying that 'we exist too'. The centrality of Karabakh in the Armenian identity for some of the interviewees is more than the impact of Armenia, as a homeland, on the identity in question:

> Karabakh went through the same thing [as the 1915 deportations], it would have been the same as the other part of Armenia that we were kicked out of. Of course, I don't want to see that again. People who live in Karabakh are Armenian. They live there. Their grandparents lived there, their great-grandparents lived there and they were being kicked out of their places. I wouldn't go to Armenia to fight for Armenia, but for Karabakh, I could. It's a small nation. If Karabakh did not stand, more Armenians in the diaspora would not consider themselves Armenian. They would just say "forget it" and "let's just", you know "mix with wherever we are".

(Artun, 1st generation, New York, male)

For the Armenians, the loss means the loss of identity that finds its expression in the struggle, and the Karabakh case presents them with a ground to reinforce this image with the fight for their survival. It is seen that the diaspora members refer to the region as a

centre of the Armenian national resistance as its predecessors in their ancestral lands did, and it is regarded as a place representing resurrection. The topographic features of the region are frequently portrayed amongst the respondents of both communities. Those who had been to Karabakh told their experiences about how they were inspired by the arduous and robust mountains in the region, and they identified their state of mind with this grandness embodied in the slogan of 'We Are Our Mountains'.

The 'We Are Our Mountains' monument, carved by Sargis Baghdasaryan, stands in the north of Stepanakert (known as Khankendi in Azeri), the capital city of the *de facto* Republic of Artsakh, in 1967. The monument, which depicts an old man and an old woman, *tatik* and *papik* (grandmother and grandfather in English), symbolises the long-standing legacy of the Armenians in the territory. Furthermore, its nature itself plays an essential role. Kasparian (2001, p.139) states that the maxim and icon of the monument "have become powerful symbols representing not simply nationalism, but the synergy of nature and culture in the Karabagh struggle". The grandness of the terrain on the Armenian psyche invokes an image that is invincible and a spirit determined to "reclaim and repossess a history and territory that had been denied to them for many years" (Kasparian, 2001, p.140).

**Figure 13** The 'We Are Our Mountains' monument (Image: Marcin Konsek, source: Wikipedia, 2021).

Nogué and Vicente (2004, pp.117-118) stress the importance of the landscape in the national identity as one of the symbols which is used by nationalist ideologies to reinforce the national connections with a group of people who associate themselves with this landscape. In this regard, mountains are prominent mythologic symbols as much as natural boundaries. This mythological association is also seen in the national symbol of the image of Mount Ararat which is associated with pre-Christianity Armenian mythology and historic Armenia. Similarly, Nogué and Vicente (2004, p.122) refer to the mountains in Spain which have become "mythical, regenerative, almost initiatory" symbols of Catalan nationalism.

Despite the centrality of the region in the Armenian diasporic identity, there are some remarks emphasising that Karabakh plays a crucial role as a founding identity marker for the Armenians living in Armenia and Karabakh rather than for Armenians in the diaspora:

> We have to consider Artsakh is a relatively new problem in our culture, I mean like in our identity based, to affect our identity. So, the Artsakh conflict started in

the early 90s. So, it's relatively new to be nearly to have such an immense impact on our identity. I mean, it concerns us. I'm sure everybody, every Armenian is concerned, but I wouldn't say it plays a huge role in their identity in the diaspora, mostly it plays a bigger role for Armenians in Armenia. That's one of the differences that we have which totally makes sense because those people are in the battle. They lose family members in the battle. So naturally, it's expected for them to care more about the issues in the diaspora.

(Alin, 1st generation, New York, female)

In the diaspora, not as much, we don't care about the issue, but in Armenia more so. So diasporans, it's not their war technically, but it is, but they're not as tied to it, but in Armenia definitely, and I personally just want peace. I'm very anti any type of war. I'm very anti any sort of mass persecution. This is my personal standpoint, and I hope most people believe that but country circumstances dictate otherwise.

(Hrant, 2nd generation, New York, male)

It can be concluded that the respondents who think that the conflict more affects the Karabakh and Armenia Armenians than those living in the diaspora are referring to the political and economic challenges to which the local people have to be exposed due to sanctions imposed by their disputed neighbouring countries, Azerbaijan and Turkey. The role of Karabakh in the diasporic identity for some of the second-generation and third-generation Armenians in the host country manifests itself in the Armenian Cause which should be supported in the international arena on behalf of their distant homeland, but the conflict, even its active form, does not bring about any consequences which directly affect their lives in the place of settlement. Their attachment to the conflict is mostly shaped through social media. As first-generation migrants, they update their knowledge with videos, news published by the organisations' newspapers, and articles posted on their social media accounts, which permeate their daily lives. On the other hand, illiteracy regarding the conflict is regarded as not being Armenian enough, as in Krikor's case, who are mostly engaged in the religious aspects of the identity:

I felt a lot more discrimination here from Armenians than the Armenians in Armenia. They were saying I was not Armenian enough, because, you know, [they say] "You don't know what's going on there [Karabakh], you don't know the struggle of Artsakh or Karabakh". I didn't know too much about it at that point in my life, I still don't know.

(3rd generation, New York City, male)

Krikor's statement is very similar to Mavroudi's (2010, p.244) discussion of "real" Palestinian amongst those who live in Greece. Mavroudi indicates that this status rests on a willingness to stay informed about what is happening in Palestine. The diaspora organisations also set a ground for the diasporic Armenians to raise their awareness with their specific agendas towards the region by various initiatives. In addition to their political support, their humanitarian initiatives are prominent amongst the community members such as their campaigns for (re)building schools, infrastructure and orphanages in the region, organising school trips to Armenia and Karabakh, movie screening and lectures. Apart from the traditional organisations, cultural-compatriotic associations make an effort to support them. For example, a cultural organisation, the Armenian Association of Toronto, raised money to fund a school in Shushi, Karabakh, in collaboration with the Yalkezian Foundation based in Ontario. Moreover, there are some individual initiatives to support some of the families in the region. A first-generation community member from Toronto states that he preferred to send money via his acquaintances who know particular people who are in need in the region.

During my fieldwork in Toronto, I encountered some people who planned to go to Karabakh to attend the Pan Armenian Games, which are held every four years. The Games, which have been held since 1999, are multi-sport games and welcome Armenian competitors from Armenia and the diaspora (Elliott, 2019). One of the main purposes of the Games, which are usually held in Yerevan, is to build relations between the diaspora and Armenia. For the first time, in the summer of 2019, the Games were held in Karabakh. The former president of the *de facto* Republic of Artsakh, Bako Sahakyan, underlined that holding the Games in Karabakh was to strengthen the ties of the "Armenia-Artsakh-Diaspora trinity" (Elliott, 2019). Moreover, that the Games were held in the region was seen as a message to Azerbaijan by demonstrating the solid existence of the Armenians in the region, and also by showing "strength, willpower, organization and unity" in line with the words of former President Sahakyan (Elliott, 2019). Although the reason for choosing Karabakh for the event was symbolic, one interviewee from Toronto states that the reason is more economic to develop the region with diaspora income.

The respondents' attachment to Karabakh is seen as "identity-based emotional identification" (Koinova, 2011) with claims of Armenian authenticity in the region and of the struggle for the national existence, which triggers the collective trauma narrative. This narrative is embodied in the robust landscape of the region which is associated with the Armenian revolutionary struggle in the nineteenth century. The sense of belonging to the conflicted portion of the homeland has become an extension of the collective trauma, despite the fact that new generations' manifestations of Armenian identity are articulated in alternative forms beyond the 1915 narratives, as was previously discussed. Their attachment to the region in their everyday lives manifests itself in the civil aids mediated by the organisations, and it is not possible to say that all of the interviewees, especially amongst the native-born generations, do not have a fervent nationalist articulation by defining their emotions regarding the region. However, the most recent crisis, which occurred after I had completed my fieldwork, can be seen as "transformative events" relating to "significant threats to diasporic identity" (Koinova, 2011, pp.339, 347) which largely mobilise the North American diaspora, as in many places, to take collective action.

## 7.4   Conclusion

Armenia's physical accessibility as an independent country enables the Armenian diasporic identity to be more integrated into transnational spaces amongst my respondents. In Toronto, 90% of my respondents had been to Armenia, and this proportion was less amongst the Armenians in New York City with more than 83% of the participants. Half of those who had not yet visited Armenia in New York City stated that they strongly wanted to visit the country. One of the participants amongst those who had not visited stated that he owned a house there with his family and had long-term plans in Armenia.

Almost all of the participants were engaged in transnational activities, mostly through different organisations and their social media accounts. They receive updated information and news shared by the official social media accounts of the organisations. They regularly interact with the homeland in some way. According to Tchilingirian (2020, p.39), in general, the homeland phenomenon in institutions' discourse is attributed to 'Armenia'.

Although the groups which I focused on are mobilised by different diaspora organisations, their perception regarding the homeland is flexible in describing it as Armenia. Those who regard Armenia as their homeland make a distinction between the place which is ethnically demarcated and the place where they feel comfortable. In this regard, the difference between homeland and home is prominent, which also affect their idea of repatriation. The striking majority of the respondents in both cities do not see repatriation as an option for their future lives. There are some who have a house or long-term projects to be used in the development of the country, but the respondents, in general, do not have any plan to build a 'home' in Armenia.

There were two interesting examples of diaspora activists who defined their homeland as the place where they were born and raised, the USA. They acknowledge that they have a lot of heritage and ties to Armenia, but this attachment does not translate into regarding the state as a homeland. Except for some very particular examples, the Armenians encountered during the research do not have dual citizenship with Armenia. Some respondents feel attached to more than one place. Historic Armenia is one of them, a view that is mostly shaped by the collective narratives. Some of the respondents preferred to state that their homeland was "Western Armenia" where the roots of authentic Armenianness are regarded to be. The geographical and thus cultural heterogeneity of the communities is one of the reasons for the lack of physical attachment to Armenia even though the state is one of the most unifying elements.

To sum up, Armenia functions as one of the key components in the boundary maintenance (Brubaker, 2005) of the Armenians in the diaspora, and especially those who were born and raised in the late 1980s have more opportunities to sustain their identity by interacting with their ethnic state compared with previous generations. The possibility of regularly going to Armenia has changed people's perception in the diaspora to feel that they have an independent entity that protects the Armenian identity to be assimilated into different cultures, as in the case of the diaspora.

The respondents' attachment to Karabakh is based on an "identity-based emotional identification" (Koinova, 2011) as much as to Armenia. However, the sense of belonging here is mostly shaped by the collective trauma of the events of 1915. There is a dialectical

reinforcement between the attachment and the rhetoric of 'never again'. Their memory is more vivid since the conflict is currently ongoing, even it is frozen. Information regarding political developments in the region is accessible through online platforms which serve as a transnational tool for mobilising the Armenian diasporas in general. The respondents who went to Armenia generally visited Karabakh for touristic purposes. Diaspora organisations have a series of initiatives to keep awareness of the region alive since it is considered an important component of the identity. According to my observations and based on the responses of the participants, to be involved in the transnational engagement in the context of long-distance nationalism on behalf of Armenia is bounded by the humanitarian aid for a regular diaspora member to various times and degrees. However, as was seen in the most recent crisis in the region in 2020, which occurred after my fieldwork, there were significant demonstrations against Azerbaijan and its ally Turkey in the North American cities including my research sites, as in different diasporas over the world. It is arguably hard to say whether some of my respondents who state that they are not politically oriented did become politicised while manifesting their identity in this process, or whether ethnic Armenians associated themselves more as a part of an Armenian diaspora group, but as Brubaker (2002, p.171) clearly says, "certain dramatic events, in particular, can serve to galvanize and crystallize a potential group, or to ratchet up pre-existing levels of groupness". Demmers (2007, p.8) similarly states that particular events can spark the identity and cause a "diasporic turn". Therefore, when the frozen conflict starts to thaw, the national loyalty of the diaspora members might increase. On that point, attachment to Karabakh thus appears to be an exception to the "syncretic and fused understanding" (Dwyer, 2002, p.191) of North American Armenian identity.

# Chapter 8. Conclusion

## 8.1 The main explorations and scope of the research

The main aim of the thesis was to investigate new forms and discourses of diasporic identities and senses of belonging for Armenians on the east coast of North America. The thesis posed three key questions. Firstly, about perceptions and manifestations of Armenian identity by individuals involved in community affairs as part of diasporic society in two east-coast North American metropolises, New York City and Toronto. I examined the ways in which such diasporans interact with both their ethnic cognates and the dominant culture in their country of residence. Secondly, about the ways in which community members sustain their ethnic and diasporic identities in the context of their multicultural belongings. This was explored by tracing how the Armenian communities create a 'transnational diaspora consciousness' apart from old-diasporic organisations. The question of what the multiplicity of the diaspora channels means for subsequent generations and for the construction of the collective identity in a wider perspective was explored. Thirdly, about the role of the homeland, today's independent Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, in shaping the Armenian identity. Drawing on self-representations of Armenianness, manifest in different ways, the thesis explored how community members perceive and imagine the notion of homeland, and how they mobilise on behalf of their homeland. These investigations were located within wider discussions of belonging in relation to the concepts of diaspora, transnationalism and translocality, and long-distance nationalism.

## 8.2 The findings and the contributions of the research

Throughout the thesis, I have traced how diasporic identities, mainly for more recent generations of Armenians, are complicated by reference to both ethnic provenance and the dominant cultures. I followed Tölölyan's (2010; 2014) approach to "diasporic transnationalism" and explored how it transforms the articulations of Armenian identity

amongst different communities in east-coast North American cities where the traditional forms of ethnic identities are fragile. Toronto and New York City are similar, but distinct, as the participants underlined. They are both old Armenian settlements where the spatial concentration of the communities is not as visible as on the USA's west coast. This leads the community to make more effort to be involved in their diasporic spaces. Intensive interaction with the dominant culture, however, creates the 'threat' of assimilation for subsequent generations, sparking debate about the extent to which they construct their identities in 'symbolic' ways. However, Armenianness has found a middle course, revealing itself in different ways, that is no longer confined to traditional forms of identity and political attachments, yet retain a closeness to ethnic representations. This hybrid representation of identity is motivated by interaction with Armenia and focuses on more cultural aspects of identity. It amalgamates Western and Eastern Armenian socio-cultural elements, a move that has been encouraged and facilitated by new-generation diaspora organisations. This research thus enhances our understanding of how encounters with Armenia as homeland have affected Armenian identity and contributed to practices of Armenianness. I argue that this flexibility renders diaspora identities sustainable. Identity retains elements of discourse of traditional organisations regarding past traumas and demands for genocide recognition. Recent generations, however, no longer see their identity as being defined solely, or even principally, by the genocide. It is chiefly at times of renewed crisis, prompting perceptions of existential threat amongst Armenians worldwide, that the notion of collective trauma is evoked. I, therefore, claim that Armenian identity represents both homeland-orientated and collective post-trauma-oriented components.

### 8.2.1 Armenian diasporic identity and Armenianness

Bakalian (1994) explored the community living in the New York Metropolitan area by conducting a substantial questionnaire in 1986, more than thirty years ago and concluded that the Armenian identity had become symbolic across subsequent generations, as I have indicated throughout this thesis. Today, however, my research suggests that Armenians who identify as such do not define themselves as diluted versions of an older sense of national identity. In other words, recent generations prefer to actualise their

ethnic provenances in the grey area between 'traditional' and 'symbolic' definitions of identity. They avoid the essentialist manifestation of the identity within the context of Armenianness. For them, "the erosion of boundaries through assimilation" (Brubaker, 2005, p.7) is inevitable, especially as reflected in the command of ethnic language. But those who engage in diasporic spaces transform this erosion and become 'selective' in sustaining their identities. This selectiveness, underlined by Tölölyan (2014) and Pattie (2005b, p.58), makes room for identities to persist and flourish amongst subsequent generations even though they differ from those of their ancestors. Tchilingirian (2018, p.3) emphasised the differences between ways of manifesting Armenianness, stressing that these distinctions "are not absolute". As already explained, diasporic identities are contingent upon whatever place-specific conditions they are subject to. So the goal of the current research was to determine how historical diaspora groups varied in different environments. Focusing on articulations of identity amongst the Toronto community, which is understudied and slightly overshadowed by the Armenian communities in Montreal and Los Angeles in terms of scholarly interest, highlights the differences between diasporic societies. It is widely acknowledged that diasporic societies are not monolithic but are individually distinctive. The study supports this common conviction, revealing internal divisions within each group, as well as differences between communities settled in different places. Part of this study was conducted in an English-speaking, Anglo-Saxon culture-dominated environment in Toronto and did not encounter as much 'boundary-erosion' amongst the community members as the study conducted in New York City, where the group is more scattered and more adopts the dominant culture. My research thus shows how the Toronto community is subject to assimilation processes, yet retains distinct and visible organisations and institutions. The Toronto community, with its visible and functional ethnic organisations and geographically concentrated Armenian community, is, therefore, more community- and organisation-oriented. This influences their ways of sustaining their identities in individual and diasporic spaces. Therefore, the mechanisms which construct the identity and keep it alive in the diaspora are contextual.

The fact that identities manifest themselves in non-essential ways does not negate the fact that they retain and reflects their traditional forms, which generate internal divisions

and contradictory understandings of what Armenianness is, and who is an Armenian. The internal and external boundaries drawn around 'authentic' Armenian and diasporic Armenian clearly indicate the traditional definitions of Armenian identity. Boundary maintenance (Brubaker, 2005) here not only encapsulates resistance towards the host society but also involves a different interpretation of the Armenian identity when the grey area becomes blurred through intergroup encounters. It was observed that when the Armenians defined the performance of the Armenianness of other groups within the community, there was a loaded interpretation in their definitions which involved a discursive power to decide who reflects the authentic identity, as in the case of Bolsahays, and who belongs to the diasporic group, as in the case of Hayastantsis.

My respondents generally did not state that they were not discriminated against in their country of residence but they emphasised that the existence of 'discrimination' is more about "what type of Armenian are you?" and "who can belong to the diasporic society?" Bolsahays are sometimes criticised for reflecting Turkish cultural traits in the community, whereas Hayastantsis are regarded as outside the category of diaspora. Buttimer (1980, p.170) comments on the conviction that there is a significant "contrast between the *insider's* ways of experiencing place and the *outsider's* conventional ways of describing them" (italics in original). Although the boundaries around the diasporic spaces are porous, the Hayastantsis were described as outsiders by most of the participants who underlined the 'conditions' to be 'inside'. This is consistent with Brubaker's (2005, p.12) suggestion that the diaspora should be considered as a "category of practice". Those who are involved in this category of practice are seen as part of diasporic society in the case of the Armenian diaspora. It can therefore be argued that group members encounter and update each other about the boundaries concerning Armenianness. Drawing upon these findings, one contribution of the thesis is to focus on internal boundaries that shape intergroup relations. The estrangement between the participants and immigrants from Armenia gives clues about the sense of cultural disconnection from the homeland which the community members have developed. It is worth noting that the tension between both groups (Bolsahays and Hayastantsis) and other members of the diasporic community has decreased. One reason for this specific to the Bolsahays was the assassination of the Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, who used

to be part of Istanbul's Armenian community. The prejudice towards Bolsahays in Istanbul and also in the diaspora has transformed with the development of empathy towards them in the diaspora. The divide between the Hayastantsis and the traditional diaspora appears to be shrinking as younger generations of Hayastantsis embrace the dominant culture. Yet it is likely that the differences about the presentation of Armenian identity will always be debated in the diaspora with all newcomers, as in the case of recent Armenian immigrants from Syria who settled in Toronto.

### 8.2.2 Aspects of the Armenian diaspora engagement

Internal differences, mostly derived from geographical differences, reflect the multiplicity of the organisations. There are several representation channels divided into small cells. Recent generations complain that this erodes the power they would derive from being unified as a diasporic society. In the diaspora today, the strict ideological divisions represented by Armenian parties during the Cold War which led to intra-communal splits, are hardly apparent in my research sites. The majority of younger generations have little knowledge of the Apostolic church's internal strife, which is linked with this ideological division. This finding is consistent with Bakalian's (1994, p.164) findings on the lack of interest of recent generations in Armenian political parties. However, ongoing negotiations over the Armenian and diasporic identities based on geographical differences in which distinctive cultural features are embedded remain intact.

The most important finding is that although traditional diasporic organisations preserve their power to mobilise the communities and form a fruitful ground for keeping the identity alive, new-generation, homeland-orientated, philanthropic and educational or career-driven organisations provide those who do not see themselves as close to any traditional organisations with alternative ways to be inside the ethnic realm. The established diaspora organisations' hegemony is not, however, challenged by the new-generation organisations. Rather, they function as complementary or subsidiary channels to traditional organisations with their generative power that gravitates towards the homeland and reshapes identities by creating platforms for dialogue between Armenia

and the diaspora. They form a platform and creative reasons for younger generations who want to associate themselves with the Armenian world.

As discussed above, independence influenced the discourse and practices of the old diaspora organisations. The decision of AGBU to downsize in Toronto to focus more on Armenia is a striking indication, even though it caused complaints amongst the community who saw the existence of the diaspora organisations as the future of the identity in the diaspora. On the other hand, as AGBU's president Berge Setrakian (AGBUvideo, 2013) states, the investment in Armenia to develop the homeland is defined as being "for the sake of diaspora" to "cater" the Armenian identity of the new generations who reject older organisational affiliations. This prompts the question of whether the ultimate reference of ethnic identity in the future will be Armenia, or if the lack of a strong Armenia will cause the diaspora to fade. Philanthropic actions taken by diasporic individuals are not sufficient to describe the identity assigned by a single place. The possibility of regular travel to and from Armenia has changed perception in the diaspora, but such interaction or long-distance support for the homeland seem to not reduce the influence of the ancestral narratives about 'old' or sending countries and their distinctive cultural components for subsequent generations. References to the old country as a constituent element of the identity resonate in the local and transnational diasporic fields. Those who engage in this sustain their Armenianness in line with both their predecessors' belongings and also the relatively new independent homeland.

This research, as previously noted, was limited to those who are in the diasporic spaces. It is obvious that the participants in these fields are few compared with the total Armenian populations of the research sites. Although this does not mean that there is no other way of manifesting identity other than being engaged in the community, this trend could mark the growing influence of the dominant host culture on ethnic belongings. At the same time, limited participation might mean that the model of the communities is changing, which also impacts diasporic mobilisation. In the context of new technologies and virtual platforms which consume the lives of people worldwide, and of course the requirements of living in big cities, a future community model might not involve those who come together in a physical building and its subsidiary organisations, where they spend part of their everyday lives with ethnic cognates and where their children grow

up. New generation Armenians' expectations do not echo traditional organisations' discourses and ways of mobilisation. The footprints of the communities in North America, at least in the locations on which I focused, seem to gravitate towards the production of ethnic and cultural identities within mission-specific organisations and ethnic social networks in the diasporic realm, rather than engaging in traditional ethnic spaces. The AGBU's decision to close its school in Toronto can be viewed within this framework. The closure was chiefly blamed on a financial deficit caused by low enrolment. This is consistent with the desire of recent generations to not be outsiders in the host country.

In the definition of modern Armenian identity, Armenianness is constructed horizontally, manifested independently from the essentialist requirements articulated by 'hardliners'. For example, a lack of Armenian language skills was not a barrier to participation in community affairs, since the communication was mainly in English. Full command of the Armenian language is not, moreover, regarded as a litmus test for being Armenian, mainly by the recent generations, even though some of them regret the general decline in knowledge of the language. There is a cultural revival that becomes possible with the native-borns' interpretation of identity, which expands the limits of cultural identity.

### 8.2.3   Home and homeland(s)

Despite internal differences, the Armenian participants imagined every single Armenian as a member of their 'imagined community', but there was less sense of commonality in the attribution of a place as their homeland, although it has become crucial to Armenian identity.

Independent Armenia has transformed the diaspora abroad from an exilic nation to a diasporic transnation (Tölölyan, 2010, p.28) and created new cohesiveness (Panossian, 1998) around a single place named 'homeland'. This study has shown the transnational aspects of those who engage in the diasporic space and demonstrated that the diasporic activism of subsequent generations challenges Bakalian's (1994, pp.440-441) claim about "token participation" of the Armenians in the organisations. In the motivation for transnational engagements, the respondents' insights showed that feelings of belonging

to a shared nation were stressed more than an attachment to Armenia. However, those who engage in homeland affairs, even though most of the participation is limited to cultural and humanitarian support, do not construct the idea of 'home' for Armenia in their "cognitive environment". My research has presented a detailed exploration of how the notion of translocality and collective memory affect participants' sense of a location other than Armenia or Nagorno-Karabakh as a homeland. In the presentations, their negative and positive experiences in Armenia, mainly with locals, and the cultural disconnection hampered their potential adaptation in Armenia, which feeds the idea of long-term 'return'. This cultural gap between Western and Eastern Armenians in Armenia is expected to narrow with the latest immigration wave of Syrian Armenians to Armenia. Furthermore, as the Hayastantsis continue to emigrate to the West and diaspora organisations interact more closely with the country, the cultural amalgamation will increase.

My findings demonstrate how feelings of belonging are accompanied by diasporic mobilisation on behalf of a (part of) homeland, Artsakh. Their reconfiguration of the attachment to this region was consolidated not only by the continuation of traumatic collective memory but also by the landscape of the region which resembles robust geographical features of their lost territories portrayed in the narratives. The findings showed how their cultural-oriented diasporic activism transformed into a political one in times of crisis. The last conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia reinforced this. It is obvious that the loss of land in the last crisis created disappointment in the diaspora and recalled the narratives of forced relocation from the Old Country which transformed them into an exilic nation, then a diaspora. An important question is how this disillusionment will find an answer in Armenians' "webs of significance" in particular to collective identity and the long-term sense of unity. The new traumatic displacement of those who had to leave their homes in the conflict areas and the ways in which their potential migration to the diaspora might reconfigure their place-attachments, and relationship with Hayastantsis in Armenia and traditional diasporas in the West are thought-provoking. Brah (1997, p.193) commented that the concept of diaspora conjures up "the imagery of traumas of separation and dislocation", which are accompanied by

the construction of the identity, and remind us of the potential to give its members fresh starts and aspirations for the future.

This study brings the emotional aspect of placemaking as home-land to the fore by drawing attention to its construction "as a *relation* between material and imaginative realms of process" (Blunt and Dowling, 2006, p.22, italics in original). King and Christou (2011, pp.452, 455) emphasise that there is a greater focus on the migrant-generations' transnational experiences than their descendants', and state that transnational engagements of the migrants in the social fields refer to "a mixture of economic, affective and symbolic ties usually based on principles of reciprocity and solidarity". This study sheds light on transnational relationships between native-born young Armenians and their homeland. The construction of post-independence Armenia as a homeland in the diasporic mind is particularly based on a sense of co-responsibility or solidarity, which is encouraged by the organisations or stirred by individual initiatives. Here, the significance of diasporic individual ventures emerges, which were not the primary focus of this research. In this respect, one of the most noticeable gaps in the literature is the lack of emphasis on female diasporic engagements other than charity and humanitarian endeavours. Diasporic entrepreneurship run by women contributes not only to the development of the homeland by including Armenian women in Armenia in the production process but also to the economic and social emancipation of the women in the homeland. One can examine how these diasporic ventures, including online platforms, transform into political channels by providing a space for resistance, solidarity and activism amongst like-minded ethnic cognates to struggle and raise awareness about gender inequality, such as domestic violence in the homeland, emphasising the agency of Armenian women in homeland politics. Walton-Roberts et al. (2019, p.296) emphasise that "gender is a neglected aspect of diaspora scholarship". One of the unanswered questions in this study is related to the lack of gendered inquiry emphasising how Armenian women with different geographical affiliations are situated in the socio-cultural matrix of the research fields and also in nationalist rhetoric comprising stereotypes for women in transnational fields, which require further study through a geographical lens.

King and Christou (2011, pp.452-453, 458) demonstrate the existence of a different typology of returns and show that in recent studies, "the type of movement can have various expressions – real, virtual, imagined, desired, forced or denied". According to this description, the return mobilities also include short-term visits in a corporeal way. This study thus contributes to a new understanding of the homeland 'return' of second- and later diasporic Armenians, as adults, to Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh by discussing their transnational engagements in the host countries and in Armenia/Karabakh through traditional and new-generation diaspora organisations (see also Darieva, 2011). Native-born generations gravitate more towards the Armenian state in the evolution of their Armenian diasporic identity than their Western Armenian predecessors despite the multiple-placedness of 'homeland'. Nevertheless, the fact that the ties are reinforced by the interaction with the homeland cannot translate into a permanent return for the first- and second-generation participants nor does it lead them to fully adopt cultural aspects of the Armenian state.

In addition to the second- and subsequent generations' homeland orientation to Armenia, their place attachment to the ancestral lands continues to exist in political ways. Their cultural expressions in their everyday lives refer to the past on behalf of historic Armenia. The co-responsibility to restore the homeland, Armenia and Karabakh, is simultaneously connected to the sense of reparations for the collective trauma. Meanwhile, this study sought to give a voice to participants from different generations to look more closely at the image of Turk in the psyche of Armenians in the construction of ethnocultural and national boundaries and to tackle the misconceptions and total-stigmatisation which prevail in Turkish society about what the Armenian diaspora is by challenging the supposition regarding the purported monolithic structure and demonisation of the diaspora.

King and Christou (2011, p.456) stress that the second-generations' transnational attachments might refer to "multiple spaces and influences". In Armenian diasporic transnationalism, in addition to the second-, third- and later generations, the belonging of first-generation diaspora Armenians who had already been diasporasized also have multiple transnational attachments regarding spaces and influences. The ancestral lands, the sending country, the country of residence and the Armenian state might

simultaneously constitute their sense of belonging and their cultural expressions might be embedded in all these places. Their distinctive cultural expressions can permeate their transnational activities such as a picnic which is organised by a cultural organisation consisting of Armenians from Iran, and in which Eastern Armenian is spoken and Persian cuisine is served. It is also possible to see their efforts to collect remittances to send a school, which is in the homeland. The Armenian Association of Toronto, for example, collaborates with the Yelkezian Foundation to raise funds to send a school, which is in Karabakh.

The hybridity in Armenian diasporas has run as a golden thread throughout the history of pre-modern and contemporary Armenian diasporic identity. My study disentangles the complexities derived from that fusion which is "a process of self-searching, self-reflection, transition and transformation" (Christou, 2011a, p.253) of their historicised, ethnicised and spatialised identities. Further research should consider the positioning of the emotionalities of gendered and racialised identities in the Armenian diaspora. For example, the emotions and belonging of black Armenians living in the USA can strikingly illustrate entanglements of identity for negotiating the authenticity of Armenianness in the diaspora and also Armenia.

Overall, this work contributes to the geographies of diasporas by showing the ever-changing façade of common affinities which have manufactured a group identity fragmented by divergent understandings of identities of the diasporic Armenians through time and space. It offers a critical exploration of relations between the diasporic community and place with a specific focus on cultural distinctiveness and intergroup relations. Rios and Adiv (2010, p.11) state that diasporic experiences are interwoven with "the complexities of class, race, gender, generation, and other social divisions" (Jazeel, 2006, cited in Rios and Adiv, 2010, p.11). However, according to Rios and Adiv (2010, p.11), such issues are too often ignored in diaspora studies. In the Armenian diaspora case, the "authenticity" of the identity reflecting the "'pure' form of culture or language" (Rios and Adiv, 2010, p.11) was a subject of discussion in the diasporic group whose members had different countries of origin. The diasporic members' identification of other Armenians in the group were intertwined with their senses of the places in question. Furthermore, this debate becomes more significant in environments where the

diasporic channels are more visible and active, and thus are stronger in being able to keep the communities' identities alive in the diasporic spaces, as in the case of the Toronto community. Therefore, this study highlights how diasporic identities and experiences are positioned depending on the different spaces which allow the fundamental set of characteristics of the identities to be vivid. It can be foreseen that this contentious interplay of place and culture and the sense of disconnectedness within the group and to the homeland in the diaspora will erode over time with increased interaction of the diasporic and immigrant peoples with each other and also with the defined homeland, Armenia. As the emotionality and positionality of individuals towards a place and identity are subject to change, and subjects are never exactly who they think they are, group identification will make room for distinct cultural practices.

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