UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
RIVERSIDE

Survivors: An Ethnographic Study of Armenian American Activism and Expression

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Anthropology

by

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June 2013

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Acknowledgements

I sincerely wish to thank all who made possible the realization of this project.

I thank my advisors, Christina Schwenkel, Sally Ness, and Paul Ryer for their support and editorship. They were gracious enough to hear what I often poorly communicated and then offer helpful guidance. Other members of the University of California, Riverside, community who contributed to this project include Anne Sutherland, Yolanda Moses, Susan Ossman, and Fariba Zarinebaf. In professional settings including conferences, seminars, and work spaces, I benefitted from numerous types of feedback, collaboration, and conversation that informed this project. Thanks go especially in this regard to Jessica Bodoh-Creed, Lilith Mahmud, Robert Davis, and Edward Kasinec. I also thank Christopher C. Taylor whose undergraduate courses at the University of Alabama at Birmingham resonated with me.

Funding for research and writing in southern California was provided by the University of California, Riverside, Graduate Division through the Graduate Research Mentorship Program Fellowship and the Dissertation Year Program Fellowship. Research at Columbia University was made possible by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

I am grateful for the many persons in the Armenian American community, the Armenian diaspora, Armenia, southern California, and related online communities who allowed me to share in their personal and professional lives. I leave individuals and institutions unnamed, but I am so thankful for your trust and friendship.

Thanks go also to my students whose questions about and interest in my research drove me toward clarity and precision and whose asking, “Are you a doctor yet?” kept me writing. Through working with you, I developed my scholarly voice and continually reassessed this project.

Lastly, I thank the friends and family who walked with me through this eight-year process. Deborah, thank you for listening, editing, and reading, and always between the lines. Jen, thank you for inspiration and motivation. Amanda, thank you for traveling with me. Cindy Summers, thank you for making the last two years of working on this dissertation physically possible. To my mother, Alene, thank you for understanding my decision in taking this route, for indulging the psychological work I engaged during this project, and for encouraging curiosity. Above all, I thank Ivan. Without your love and support, I might not have chosen to complete this journey. You were here every day, in all the struggles and little triumphs of grad school and living life, and you accomplished this too.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Survivors: An Ethnographic Study of Armenian American Activism and Expression

by

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Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Anthropology
University of California, Riverside, June 2013
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In nationalist Armenian American youth activism and expression, the practice of memory of woundedness and genocide is conceived as a form of resistance related to claiming a particular subjectivity and identity as diasporan Armenians and as a minority group in the United States. Armenian American youth position themselves in history as remnants and freedom fighters, demanding recognition of the Armenian genocide in a "struggle for justice" that simultaneously calls for their recognition as survivors in a context of perceived denial. The tradition of activism on which this dissertation focuses has tended toward anti-assimilationism and the assumption and display of woundedness as a means of obtaining perceptibility, for it is the distinction of woundedness on which Armenian American survivorship is legitimated. The Armenian genocide and its denial are often cited as the cause of the wound, producing survivorship as a specific position to the past and the present. Youth experience and claim survivorship through historically significant diasporan institutions that structure

commemoration services, cultural events, and political protests where practices of memory are encouraged as well as in U.S. political spaces including public schools where denial and ambiguity are personally perceived. This dissertation is based on eighteen months of field research in the Los Angeles region, home to one of the largest populations of diasporan Armenians.

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Note on Language and Names

In the text, I have chosen to represent some terms in Armenian script. Following, I have placed in parentheses the English transliteration(s), often along with the translation, of the term in the variants I observed used during field research. If I observed both Eastern and Western variations of a term, I represent both of those in the transliteration. While it does not promote consistency, I represent language as observed in order to accurately reflect the diversity I encountered. After an Armenian term is introduced in the text, I thereafter use one transliterated term consistently.

The names of individuals excluding some public, media, and academic figures have been changed or omitted to reflect the confidential nature of interviews and communications that comprise this research. I have tried to use pseudonyms that I feel adequately represent each person in terms of gender, diasporan positionality, and age. Names of institutions, businesses, and other sources have been omitted for purposes of confidentiality and privacy except in some cases of well-known, publicly visible groups. Where information in the text might have led a reader to deduce the identity of the person or group that I wish to treat anonymously or confidentially, tell-tale details were altered to provide confidentiality.

Chapter 1 | Introduction

Turkish citizens marched through the streets of Istanbul carrying signs that read "We are all Hrant Dink" and "We are all Armenian" (Mouradian 2011). The first time this happened was after Dink's funeral. Another was at the five year anniversary of his death, in 2012, when between 20 and 40 thousand protested the Turkish court system's acquittal of nineteen men who had been charged with criminal organization, popularly discussed as the source of orchestrating Dink's death. Through major global news sources, Turkish persons remembered Dink with respect, took progressive political stances against the Turkish state and in solidarity with Turkish minorities and human rights, and identified with Dink as a Turkish citizen. The "Armenian issue," increasing in publicity since 2005 in Turkish discourse, took solid shape around his death (Açar and Rüma 2007:452, Altınay 2006). For example, Ali Ersen Erol traced a Twitter discussion involving a Turkish journalist who announced his plan to interview Dink's lawyer on television (Erol 2013). Twitter users participating in a nationalist Turkish community online asked him, referencing the street protestors, "Did you also become an Armenian?" (Erol 2013:743). He replied that indeed he had (Erol 2013).

The co-founder and editor-in-chief of a newspaper that published in Turkish, English, and Armenian, Dink has been called a bridge-builder, an Armenian Martin Luther King, Jr., and an Armenian Turk who was "the most prominent advocate of mutual respect between Turkey's dominant population and its Armenian minority" (Temelkuran 2010:xi,4). His newspaper was interested in fostering democracy and

human and civil rights and in illuminating Armenian life in Turkey. However, for statements that pointed to Turkish responsibility for the Armenian genocide and for suggesting that Turkey lacks a good human rights record, he had been twice prosecuted for insulting Turkishness.[1] In 2007, he was shot by a young Turkish nationalist in the street in front of his office.

In Turkey, people "who knew Dink became more vocal" about their pro-Armenian interests after his death (Mouradian 2011). For example, a journalist who had worked for Dink turned a series of articles into a book about Armenians as a tribute (Temelkuran 2010). Prior to his death, his lawyer had discovered, amidst generational family silences, that her grandmother was an ethnic Armenian who had come into the family during the time of genocide. Through Dink's paper, she located long-lost Armenian relatives in New Jersey and published a book about the experience of discovering her Armenian background. After Dink's death, stories like hers, of so-called "hidden Armenians" or "leftovers of the sword," were increasingly expressed (Temelkuran 2010:66).[2] Leyla Neyzi suggests identification as Armenian can be a "source of power" for Turks who feel politically and socially marginalized or victimized in opposition to the state, and Erol's Twitter analysis suggests it can be a symbol of liberal Turkish discourse (Neyzi and Kharatyan-Araqelyan 2010:20, Erol 2013).

While it may have looked, then, as if Dink's death had the ability to bring together groups of Turkish and Armenian peoples, it also wounded and insulted some Armenian Americans. In the Los Angeles area, Armenian Americans mourned Dink as a

martyr. He was called courageous to have lived in Turkey as an Armenian, for their nationalist discourse constructed Turkey as an enemy. Turks who carried those placards in the streets were verbally attacked. Some Armenian Americans specifically expressed anger at the statement, "We are all Armenians." Disregarding it as a symbolic, civil protest or act of empathy in Turkish society, they said it went too far, that Turks certainly cannot be Armenians, and that there will only ever be one Hrant Dink. Some used it as an opportunity to continue depicting Turks stereotypically and negatively, claiming them responsible for Armenian wounds, for acting inappropriately, or for taking advantage of Armenians. The day after the assassination, Armenian Americans organized a protest against what was called the most recent case of Turkish aggression to one of Turkey's minorities. Dink was called a victim of the genocide that continues, and three days after his assassination, youth activists gathered outside the Turkish Consulate. At the spot where they annually hold protests calling for recognition of the Armenian genocide, they held a candlelight vigil in remembrance of Dink. He was mourned as a hero and activist whose "voice of freedom" was silenced by a "terrorist" (Armenian Youth Federation 2007).

I share this brief account of the discourse of Hrant Dink and his afterlife to introduce several themes of this dissertation. My central claim is that in Armenian American youth activism and expression, the practice of memory of woundedness and genocide enables a form of resistance related to claiming a particular subjectivity and identity. First, although I refer repeatedly in this dissertation to Turks, Armenians, and

Armenian Americans, as well as to youth and activists, these are generalized classifications to which are ascribed a diversity of persons. Within these groups has existed a variety of responses to Dink's murder, largely falling into two frameworks. One of these, as seen in Turkish expressions of solidarity with Armenians, leans toward a moral and political inclusiveness that is globalized in character. The other, on which I focus in this dissertation, is identified in Armenian American statements of exclusivity and nationalism, a specific sector of Armenian American discourse, which often relies on an essentialist treatment of these terms and tends toward ethnic absolutism (Gilroy 1990). I was informed by an Armenian American man, for example, that there is a singular Armenian psyche that only Armenians can understand. In such a perspective, the terms *Turk* and *Armenian* have been used to describe who is right and who is wrong, who is victim and who threatens, who remembers and who is amnesiac, and who is a survivor and who denies that. Ultimately, what is at stake in this framework is national and ethnic membership, who gets to be Armenian and who does not. In this dissertation, I assert that the figure of the survivor and the experience of survivorship are key to practicing Armenian American subjectivity and that Turks are constructed and conceived as a people who both produce(d) the hinging point of that survivorship and deny it. Although the genocide itself has been called "the cornerstone of modern Armenian identity" (including diasporan Armenian identity), my work adds to scholarship that demonstrates that lack of recognition of the genocide is just as significant (Panossian 2006:26, also Abrahamian 2005, Avakian 2010, Pattie 1997). I

draw on the work of Donald and Lorna Touryan Miller who write, “It is indisputable that […] denial of the genocide has profoundly affected survivor[s]” (Miller and Miller 1993:160). Although denial is sometimes implied by reference to genocide, writ large, this dissertation is explicitly interested in the role of denial itself, which I understand to be experienced in a way that is often intertwined with memory of genocide. The figure of the survivor is described as both the one who lived through genocide as well as the one who fights its lack of recognition today, and it is the contemporary context of this lack in which memory of past survivorship is produced. This is linked to the second theme, that of the presence of the past.

In phrases that label people “leftovers,” or elsewhere remnants, and in accusing Dink’s killer of bringing the genocide into the present by continuing to murder Armenians, the past is directly referenced as an origin of contemporary social fragmentation and past events are treated as continuous into the present. In the nationalist framework in which I situate this research, youth activists have described themselves, their knowledge, and place in the world in terms of woundedness. They practiced survivorship as remnants, distanced by several generations and nearly one hundred years from first-hand experience of genocide and living thousands of miles from where the remembered genocide occurred. To understand themselves as survivors meant they produced and practiced memory that allowed them to claim a certain authority or authenticity to that past. I situated research on survivorship in public commemoration, expression, and activism where I found explicit production and

practice of memory. This context is also a reflection of my belief that expression of Armenian American survivorship in public spaces is itself a political practice of memory and survivorship as resistance.

The third theme develops this context as particularly American, concerned with the role of the United States upon survivorship and the navigations and negotiations of youth in membership in both Armenian and American polities. Like Maud Mandel's study of Armenians in France shows, policies directed at "ethnic minorities" have not only influenced "integration" into a state and society, but also "shap[ed] how survivors came to terms with their pasts" (Mandel 2003:14). He claims that processes of integration into the French state, like in the United States, were "at least as significant as the genocide" itself in shaping a "minority culture" (Mandel 2003:207). I believe this influence is significant upon youth experiences of survivorship, and only slightly evidenced by the comparison of Dink to Martin Luther King, Jr. Such was most often expressed by younger people and was not solely a means of introducing Dink to an American audience who had not heard of him before. In part, it was a reflection of the impact of his death's timing, on January 19, near Martin Luther King, Jr., Day. I found the majority of Armenian American youth who participated in this project knew more about King than Dink, and knew more about Dink's legacy and the politics of his murderer's trial and so on than about his life and work. When, because of the news and talk about him in Armenian American discourse, more people learned about Dink's work, they associated him with a more familiar figure, that of King, who was also assassinated in an

effort to promote human and civil rights on behalf a minority group. That King is an utterly American martyr hints at the degree of contextualization of Armenian American survivorship, and it speaks to the influence of institutionalized national commemoration, public school education, and U.S. humanist and political discourses. It also hints at some degree of Armenian American identification as a non-white minority or at identification with Civil Rights history and figures. The American context, however, is an ambiguous one, as this influence exists alongside accusations of U.S. complicity in denial of Armenian American survivorship.

Fourth is the theme of voice, presence, and visibility in tension with silence, absence, and invisibility. Youth expressions display silencing in particular to represent their experiences of restricted agency and expression. This is a form of activist resistance in which youth fight imperceptibility, of the past and of their survivorship, and engage activist expressions as the making perceptible of that which is overlooked, forgotten, or denied. My view is inspired by C. Nadia Seremetakis' discussion of stillness, which she explains is the realization, through a sudden or emerging perceptibility, that something from the past has been present all along but was hidden under layers of "historical dust," unrecognized (Seremetakis 1994:12). In activism that demands recognition of the Armenian genocide and its survivors, I identify an attempt to make perceptible the existence of others and experiences distanced by time and/or space yet conceived as "still here." I am interested in the solicitation of legitimate perceptibility of subjectivity. Dink was said to be oppressed in part because of his trespassing of Turkish

law in the enactment of his desire for equal rights and recognition. It was his voice and his visibility that resisted particular laws and inspired others to rethink the legal and to raise their voices as well. As Dink's life and death remind, the function of the legal to legitimate perceptibility is manifest differentially rather than equally. From international relations that ally Turkey, Israel, and the United States, to French legislation making it illegal to deny genocide, and to youth who count the number of countries that do or do not officially recognize the Armenian genocide, the legal is treated in Armenian American activism as a primary context in which survivorship is constructed in relation to discourse of perceptibility and in relation to rights-based claims.

Youth Activists

Although this dissertation cannot claim to be limited to the study of youth, it is focused on youth as the primary research group. According to the United Nations, *youth* refers to people ages 15 to 24, though it also recognizes that the term is not easily defined (Youth). It could reference late childhood or a transition from childhood to adulthood, in these cases synonymous with adolescence and ending at legal adulthood which in the United States is at 18. The majority of youth with whom I interacted during research, and all the youth I interviewed, were 18 and older, so in this sense they were adults. I therefore use the phrase youth interchangeably as appropriate with *younger generations* and *young people* to reflect that in common discourse, *youth* is a widely used term overlapping with *young adult*. In general, popular discourse in recent years has seen the term youth more solidly extended to young adults with increasing talk of

the period of youth as prolonged. This is demonstrated by recent legislation allowing 26-year-olds in the United States to remain as dependents covered by their parents' health insurance policies and by films and television shows, in which irresponsibility and dependent behaviors more than age define youth.[3]

In Armenian American discourse, youth is broadly used to refer to persons through the twenties even when not based on dependency or irresponsible behavior. For example, Birthright Armenia, an organization that brings diasporan volunteers to live and work temporarily in Armenia, states its "primary beneficiaries" are "young diasporans" and "young diasporan adults" between the ages of 20 and 32 (Birthright Armenia 2012). These young people have often been called youth in general and casual conversation as well as by the founder of Birthright Armenia (Armenian International Magazine 2004). Numerous speeches and exhortations of youth which I heard during my research were directed at youth between the ages of 12 and thirty-something. Several persons identified as or accepted treatment as youth because they were unmarried although in their early thirties. The Armenian Youth Federation (AYF) generally welcomes members between the ages of 16 and 26, with junior members between the ages of nine and 15 (Armenian Youth Federation 2010-2011). As reflected in my research and in that of other scholars of youth activism, I refer loosely to youth apart from a definition that would rely on behaviors or a strict age-based definition, rather I especially address individuals who participate in youth activist networks and

programs, and I treat youth as encompassing a wide array of ages (Kennelly 2008, Ziemer 2009).

In the term's popular ability to negatively connote dependency, it has at times referenced a "second-class status" pointing to a person's not-yet, immature, or underdeveloped states (Ginwright, Noguera, and Cammarota 2006:xix). This view has been accused of neglecting to study the contemporary realities faced by young people in taking them largely as potential future actors (who do not act in the contemporary moment with any significance) while simultaneously investing them with hope and expectation. In contrast with the first part of that view, I understand youth as active members of various social groups and civic spaces, as persons who "should be recognized as subjects of a knowledge production," and as "vital agents of social transformation" (Ginwright, Noguera, and Cammarota 2006:xix, Gordon 2008, Gordon 2010). Further, if "youth" is a classification that points to particular, individual experiences of "constraints" of space, wealth, access, or capital, then participation in institutionalized movements can be interpreted as that which "facilitates" civic and political inclusion (Gordon 2008:34). For example, while teenagers are not allowed to vote and may find their voices constrained in political realms, they can take action through institutionalized protests and organized political expressions. It is common in identity-based movements, including the political effort to recognize the Armenian genocide, to find youth working closely with adult organizers, leaders, and politicians as their abilities and ideas are incorporated into a structured effort. Established adults can

offer “critical social [and political] capital” and can provide education in political participation, law, and “the global characteristics of power and oppression” (Ginwright, Noguera, and Cammarota 2006:1,29). Yet simultaneously youth agents are acknowledged in these movements as cultural experts whose experiences of a particular heritage are highly valued, perhaps more so than elsewhere. While on one hand youth are considered the next generation and carry hopes of the past into the future, on the other, they are individuals in a time of life where seeking one’s life purpose and identity and where personal commitment to the political are emphasized (Damon et. al. 2003). According to Susan Pattie, who conducted research on Armenian culture in Cyprus, there is greater variation within a so-called generation than between the differently recognized generations, and I clarify that my research project focused on youth who express an Armenian American identity, especially as activists (Pattie 1999).

In this framework, I am interested in how Armenian American youth activists understand themselves as survivors and how they experience survivorship. As such, I take this at one level as a study that “tr[ies] to locate” subjectivity, “the felt interior experience of the person that includes his or her positions in a field of relational power” (Das, et. al. 2000:1, Das 2007:5). Mary Thomas quotes Stuart Hall on the related concept of identity: It is

> “the point of suture, between on the one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to `interpellate', speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subject which can be `spoken'” (Thomas 2008:2866).

According to Yael Navaro-Yashin's critical reading, my approach to subjectivity is situated in a humanist scholarship where she describes subjectivity as interiorized, as a relation that privileges inner consciousness (Kennelly 2008, Navaro-Yashin 2011). It is fair to say that my approach draws on Das' "thinking of the experience of being a subject as the experience of a limit" and thinking of subjectivity as the "condition of experience" as well on Michel-Rolph Trouillot's claim that subjectivity is a "voice aware of [its] vocality" (Das 2007:4, Trouillot 1995:23). These understandings describe the subject as engaged in an exterior world and affected by it, even entangled existentially and consciously with it. They may not necessarily structurally privilege interiority but focus methodologically on it. I understand that subjectivity results from relationality and from knowledge of one's agency inclusive of practices of imagination, memory, and perception (Bennett 2010, Butler 2004, Csordas 1994). Judith Butler writes that when "speaking about the subject we are not always speaking about an individual: we are speaking about a model for agency and intelligibility" as well as for efficacy, causality, and anticipation (Butler 2004:45, also Bennett 2010). Subjectivity is both one's selfhood as well as the implications of that self in relation to others, able and constrained to act and know.

As integral to subjectivity and identity, to understanding self processes and positionalities, memory mediates relations between self and other, present and past.[4] Firstly, the subject of the survivor is commonly considered a person who remembers, or

another remembers for her, having survived a particular past experience (Fassin 2007). Practices of memory are emphasized in survivorship where the refrain "never forget" can be representative of memory's foundational role. Subjectivity is here taken as a result of amassed experience, which to forget, would be threatened (Connerton 2008, Sturken 1998). Secondly, memory's existence as social and collective constructs membership of survivors as national and unified, "imbued with moral imperatives" (Irwin-Zarecka 1994:9, also Connerton 1989, Halbwachs 1992, Renan 1990). It is within shared frameworks of memory that personal memories are "localized" and bound to one another in intimate ways (Halbwachs 1992:37,53). I understand practices of memory to apply, manifest, reproduce, and revise such frameworks (Connerton 1989, Halbwachs 1992). Personal experience in the present is "causally connected to" the past at the same time that the past is constructed through and as a function of the social and cultural present (Connerton 1989:2, also Halbwachs 1992, Malkki 1995, Sturken 1997, Yoneyama 1999). In one sense, then, memory can be understood as a means of socially reaffirming, legitimating and ordering the present and the subject's ability to act in the present (Bergson 2012[1911], Connerton 1989, Halbwachs 1992). Memory mediates the subject. In this view, "subjects are contemporaries of the past, and survivorship is a "position toward the past" (Trouillot 1995:16, also Feldman 1991).

According to Kath Weston, "every claim on a present, much less a future, much less a past, takes practice" and to study memory, subjectivity, and identity is to attempt to understand "the devices people use to conceptualize the past," the "valuations of

that past," and the way people come to believe that past is theirs (Weston 2002:92-93, also Sturken 1997). I treat Armenian American activism as the context in which to find these devices, claims, conceptualizations, and practices. I draw on Paul Connerton's work in studying habit-memory as a specific type of memory practice (Connerton 1989). In activism, memory is transferred or produced through commemorative ceremonies and bodily practices, which have been habitualized in Armenian American nationalist institutions. As practices of memory, they are performative and foster "affective dispositions," "a fundamental part" of one's subjectivity (Connerton 1989:93). Situated in larger theories of the social and cultural, the study of practice has been conceptualized as the study of interaction between structure and agency, competence and performance. In studying practices of memory, I seek to illuminate and emphasize the agentive, but I acknowledge this is inseparable from those frameworks to which it is intimately scaffolded through habit. I also treat Armenian American activism and expression as the context to study sites (*lieux*) of memory as intertwined with embodied, repertorial memory (*milieux*) (Nora 1989, Taylor 2003). Described in terms of the archive and the repertoire, Diana Taylor explains these forms of knowledge "work in tandem" and "in a constant state of interaction (Taylor 2003:21). My approach sees survivors of younger generations as simultaneously able to share living memory and treat their bodies as sites of memory, so that from a structural position of postmemory, they "approximat[e] living memory in its affective force," a second-hand remembrance

that is so deeply felt it is becomes or always has been one's lived experience of the past (Hirsch 2008:109, also Halbwachs 1992, Nora 1989, Taylor 2003).

Looking to the archival and frameworks of memory means that in investigating survivorship as a deeply personal experience and position, I also look to the national, political effort in which survivors participate in order to achieve recognition. Theoretically, paradigms of political recognition can be described as restrictive, silencing, and normative. However, in regards to subjectivity, recognition has been theorized as the basis for agency, resistance, and creativity (Butler 2004, Gregg and Seigworth 2011). It makes pragmatic the imagined, remembered, and perceived potentialities of the relational field (Bergson 2012[1911], Butler 2004, Massumi 2002). It "capture[s] and contain[s] the variation" through the conscious claiming of experience toward functionality and action (Massumi 2002:3, Bergson 2012[1911]). Described as "contingent," agency is the means of acting according to relationships within a field of power as well as the means of introducing actions that "might otherwise be inconceivable" (Kennelly 2008:199). In Jane Bennett's view, individuals are "incapable of bearing full responsibility" for the effects of their actions, and instead responsibility lies in "one's response to the assemblages in which one finds oneself participating" (Bennett 2010:37).

I try to point to such contingency in youth participation in particular modes of expression, survivorship, and memory. As activists, they call upon their perceived capabilities to solicit or effect change, but when acting as survivor activists, they are

more than intellectually or ethically invested. Their selves are entangled in activist practices and expressions. People often think of protests, community mobilization, or grassroots networking as activist practices, but an activist could also be a person who aligns his or her values with practices he or she understands to be socially responsible or ethical and then demonstrates commitment to act those practices (Kennelly 2008). The latter is inclusive of internet activism or consumer activism, for example. Through joint action and shared values, activism brings people together in the production of a community where "experts," "laborers," and "opponents" are identified and a "repertoire of collective action" legitimates a community by situating action in a particular remembered tradition (Fassin 2007:107,112). For Sally Engle Merry, "successful activists" tend to tell "simple stories of suffering and responsibility" supported by statistical, historical, and legal research, in order to generate "outrage and action" and thereby garner "attention and support" for their cause (Merry 2005:241,251). Emphasizing agency, an ethnographic account of youth activism and expression can "reveal the modes by which young people make sense of their own capacity to act" (Kennelly 2008:198-199). Often providing youth the context for the development of a life's purpose, activism provides polysemous ground for the "defensive" and "healing roles of a purpose" (Damon et. al. 2003:123).

I spoke of my thoughts about youth expression of survivorship to an up-and-coming Armenian American filmmaker near his office by Universal Studios. While in Armenia, I had seen his film, which explores silence and communication across cultural

distances in Los Angeles. Everyone in the sunny courtyard wore Hollywood black and sunglasses and held water bottles along with their coffees. He used phrases like "the people at David's organization, you know," then looked at me to see if I understood him (Interview 2009-2010). After I had gained approval by demonstrating enough knowledge, he said, "You seem to have done your homework, Melissa" (Interview 2009-2010). I then took my cue to ask him about youth activists and artists. He agreed that expression of survivorship by Armenian American youth is itself a practice of political activism. I shared with him the regular films I had seen at an annual community art night in a different part of the city. For three years in a row, at least one young Armenian American artist had produced, amidst sculptures, oil paintings, and hand-sewn items, a film in which the դուդուկ (duduk, a musical instrument) sang over images of Armenia.[5] Voice-over narrations spoke of genocide, survivors, and diaspora. I asked for this filmmaker's opinion as to why the youth would produce similar films and why so publicly, realistically, about their Armenian American identities. No other artists ever did anything like this in the years I attended. He said this was interesting to him and took a moment to think. Then he suggested that, like for himself, these youth were expressing Armenian survivorship because it was necessary. He said, "the genocide must work its way out," and they have to "get it out of [their] system" (Interview 2009-2010).

Research and Methods

When I went to Hollywood for this interview or to attend an Armenian American film festival, and when I attended a concert in the park in Pasadena, I was engaged in

field research, but I was also inhabiting a space that I had been to before this project began and that therefore set up a certain tone of personal remembrance and attachment in relation to my home and personal life in southern California, for I lived in the Los Angeles area for five years before planning this study. Rather than construct the field of research as a space outside of or in contrast to spaces of home, or even as a space at all, I understand field and home as distinct modes of experience (Appadurai 1996, Davies and Spencer 2010). The distinction between them lies not in the spaces themselves but in my goals and attention in and to various places. This is to treat space not as homogeneous, constant, or singular, but rather as a socially practiced experiential domain (De Certeau 1984, Low 2003). Spaces in which I conducted research for this project largely fall into spaces I considered those of home, but they were simultaneously spaces of encounter with the unfamiliar, with difference and its production. When I operated in a primary mode of home experience, I more strongly identified with some present quality of intimate attachment, social immediacy, or dwelling (Appadurai 1996, Clifford 1992, Gupta and Ferguson 1997). To say that I conducted 18 months of field research in 2009 and 2010 is to say that I was focused on experiencing practices, representations, and discourses of Armenian American life with inquiry guiding me (Clifford 1992). I purposefully situated myself and sought out opportunities to learn, engage, sense, and interact in a way that I might not have outside of a research agenda. However, I produced the field modality out of my experience of home, my ontological and epistemological "corner of the world" which is "from the start a place of difference"

(Bachelard 1994:4, Gupta and Ferguson 1997:33). This is to say that I allowed "self-reflection" and personal "affinities" and experiences to motivate research as a kind of "extended exploration" through which I distanced, broadened, and projected my initial personal interests (Marcus 1998:15-16).

Like Joanne Pasarro who conducted research in New York City, "I did not enter and reenter the field every day" – the Los Angeles that I "lived, worked, and played in" was in any moment inclusive of "the field" whether I was eating dinner at my mother-in-law's house, sitting alone in my car in traffic, or talking with Armenian American college students at an art show (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:153). In that I "turned the ethnographic gaze inward," I did not do so necessarily any more or less than anthropologists who have turned traditionally conceived spaces of the field into experiences of home (Schwenkel 2009:14). I allowed my home to become the field as I shifted my mode of attention and experience in its spaces, but like for other anthropological field researchers, these distinctions became blurry over time. As described by others, the practices of field research toward the production of ethnography situate a diversity of anthropological field researchers "between" different "systems of meaning" in a way that provokes reflexivity and the admission of ever-incomplete knowledge (Clifford and Marcus 1986, Narayan 1993, Gupta and Ferguson 1997). In James Davies' words, both I as the research*er* and that constructed as researche*d* "can be blended into a shared subjective space as well as implicated in each other's lives" and work (Davies and Spencer 2010:18). "The ongoing construction of my

researcher subjectivity" became a task of negotiating complex ways "of my being constructed" and was distinct per situation (Jackson 2008:38-39).

To conduct research, I relied on two primary methods, participant observation and interview. As the hallmark of anthropological research, participant observation entailed my presence, subjective engagement, and experience within the Armenian American community. The concept is quite broad and I do not use it to indicate that I became defined as an insider. Rather, it signifies my inclusion in particular spaces, practices, and events as a researcher. I tried to think deeply with participants about those common articulations a person is "likely to encounter" again and again in a particular community (Marcus and Okely 2007:395). In participant observation, I immersed myself as fully as possible into the community to achieve research goals while simultaneously conducting regular habits of my daily life. I did not engage in much open-ended "hanging out" as a preliminary strategy. I rather found it necessary to, especially at first, ask pointed questions, obtain demographic information, and, in a practical sense, get on listservs and mailing lists. In traditional conceptualizations of fieldwork, anthropologists may not have sought out events, but in my case, it was necessary to seek out particular activities marked as Armenian American, where community members came together on the basis of their public identity. Attending genocide commemoration services and lectures on genocide literature as well as interviewing activists about their political sensibilities were activities I needed to structure, and out of these I was able to develop other research experiences (Gupta and Ferguson 1997).

Like for Das, my "'entry' into the field" was not "marked by […] slow rituals of initiation" (Das 2007:13). I found that short, prepared questions and an academic introduction served to legitimate me as a researcher, often opening the door for further more casual interactions (Bowman 2010, Gusterson 1997). I also found that Armenian American youth have been exposed to researchers and their questions, surveys, and questionnaires in the past, for work conducted by Armenian American institutions or other academics (almost all of whom were also Armenian American). These youth seemed to express appreciation for my preparedness and ability to demonstrate likeness with Armenian American researchers. Questions I asked and comments I made were sometimes openly compared with those of Armenian American academics the youth had previously encountered.

I agree with Hugh Gusterson's claim that in its traditional conceptualization "participant observation does not travel well up the social structure" (Gusterson 1997:115). When Armenian Americans sent me PDF files of academic articles they thought I would find useful, I treated the material as both part of participant observation and part of building a literature review. My research involved a diverse array of relations and I often felt I was "studying up" and "sideways," conducting participant observation among those with greater or similar degrees of power and capital respectively (Bowman 2010, Gusterson 1997). Gaining access to institutions, people, or events for this project often required a combination of financial, political, and cultural capital to a degree I occasionally lacked. In many cases, research participants

and I "shared similar intellectual worlds" as graduate students, teachers, readers and writers, and travelers, but when Armenian heritage itself was the capital I lacked, I was rarely able to accommodate for it (Merry 2005:242). One group in particular that I had difficulty accessing on this basis was the Armenian Youth Federation (AYF). Though I contacted the AYF in various ways, including in person and through the use of two contacts, I was not able to participate in regular, institutionalized functions of the organization or formally interview individuals in high-level leadership roles. I was able, however, to interact with youth members during and outside of AYF activities in public, and I interviewed members of the AYF outside of their AYF affiliation. I also observed several protests in which AYF members participated. In one interview, I asked a young man, who was a youth leader of an AYF chapter, if I could attend a meeting. He said, "No, I don't think that would be a good idea" (Interview 2009-2010). As I discuss in later chapters, this organization takes upon itself a primary task of protecting, preserving, and promoting Armenian identity in the face of assimilation. For an ոտար (odar, a non-Armenian) to involve herself and potentially her voice would apparently be for the AYF to "water down" their efforts (Interview 2009-2010).[6]

I disagree, though, with Gusterson's suggestion that anthropologists should "de-emphasize participant observation" (Gusterson 1997:116). The participant observation I conducted includes what he would replace it with, "polymorphous engagement" (Gusterson 1997:116). This entailed an "eclectic" mix of experiential and information-gathering practices, including use of the Internet and media communication

technologies as well as “extensive use of reading newspapers,” literature, and analysis of other material expressions (Gusterson 1997:116). This eclecticism made my experience of participant observation rich. I found that use of videos posted on Youtube, for example, revealed different sides to protestors than that which I experienced in person at a protest. Reading news articles about events after I had seen them take place helped me to grasp deeper patterns of discourse and representation. It was the case, that in this multicultural, metropolitan area, physical presence in and among activities of the Armenian American community was necessary. However, social presence required more, leading me to seek out opportunities for specific types of participation according to my research agenda, from visiting museums to joining Armenian-centric chat groups online.

The Internet became a key site for research as it can be understood as enabling spaces for practicing a diasporic public sphere (Appadurai 1996, Moran 2005). After having met people, I was able to develop those relationships online. I was able to stay in touch with several young people online after they moved to other cities or when they were travelling, for example. In this way, my research also became somewhat deterritorialized as I participated in a network of persons with various connections to the Armenian American community of the Los Angeles area. Like Erol, I found that discussions online, from Twitter to Facebook and blogs, were enabled by and comprised “discursive power structures” as would a face-to-face conversation or published text (Erol 2013:743). It was important for me to utilize Internet discussions and comments to

grasp the greater discursive structures behind various expressions. Additionally, the Internet was an important site for the organization of activists as well as a civic space of "electronic resistance," where youth engaged "press releases," real-time information about demonstrations and political events, immediate responses, "petitions," and "fund-raising" (Khoury-Machool 2007:25-26).

The use of personal memory also aided and deepened my practices of participant observation, directing and contextualizing research experiences. When I moved to Pasadena, California, in 2000, I met several people who identified themselves as Armenian Americans, and seeds of interest were planted that would later develop into this dissertation research. I obtained two jobs over the next five years, working with diverse populations of students, about one-third of whom identified as Armenian American. I worked alongside, as I do now, Armenian American colleagues, had my coffee grounds read,[7] and learned a few Armenian words, like ես (che, casual no). At work as an educator, it was in the classroom that I learned, in any depth, about the Armenian genocide from my students. I considered these experiences a normal part of acculturating to life in the metropolitan Los Angeles area, and not a part of directed field research. However, through this project, I have rethought former experiences and relationships and arrived at more nuanced understandings because of this background. While I considered inviting former students, acquaintances, and coworkers into this research, I decided against it in order to let the research agenda motivate the selection

of participants. However, a few personal friends and acquaintances provided helpful feedback during research.

In addition to participant observation, I conducted semi-structured and unstructured interviews to focus conversations on specific topics and, in some cases, to foster a serious, thoughtful attitude. It was frequent that I would meet a person through participant observation, a new server at a café where I regularly ate and read, for example, and would discover through casual conversation an interest in conducting an interview with him or her, asking a few questions right then and there. These were not always planned interviews but rather "fortuitous" (Schwenkel 2009:16). I also obtained interviewees through formal requests, such as through professional websites. I always gave the interviewee choice of choosing the interview location. Only one interview was conducted in a home, with a married couple. As described in the interview of a filmmaker, above, I was often tested by participants as they sought confidence in me. This most involved interviewees asking me questions about what I know and my personal background, beliefs, and experiences. Like Vincent Crapanzano explains is the experience of other anthropologists, I was told by one participant, "You are going to have to give a lot of yourself first" (Davies and Spencer 2010, Interview 2009-2010).

I was most often received as an ethnically ambiguous, white American. At least twice, I was taken based on appearance to have Armenian heritage, and I experienced differential treatment in these cases. That is, my behavior and knowledge were judged by higher expectations. In one case, I was interviewed as an Armenian American and

then disappointed the interviewer when she discovered I have no Armenian heritage. When I was perceived to be a member of an unknown ethnic minority, I was more warmly treated with less expectation of performance. As a woman, I found that generally one of two things occurred when interacting with young Armenian American women. In one scenario, I was treated as someone they identified with on the basis on age, class, clothing style, or other random criteria, and this participated in my ability to establish some initial relation. The persons with whom I became closest during research were women. In the other scenario, I was perceived as a woman with whom some wished to dissociate, frequently also on the basis of class and style differences but also for other reasons which require further reflection. A few times, I experienced this treatment by young women from Armenia or who considered themselves quite modest and traditional or on the other hand extremely wealthy and socially powerful. Yet while generally experiencing a depth to my relationships with women, openly transgendered and lesbian Armenian Americans were the most openhearted and unreserved. Men of my age and older were the most willing to participate, the most admittedly curious and skeptical about me, and more curt, reserved, or authoritative in interviews. While a greater number of participants were young men, my relations and our conversations were more shallow compared to those with young women. My status as an unmarried, childless woman in my thirties was also frequently commented upon. Men most often urged me to marry my partner as if I were negatively marked by delaying it.

Recognizing the intersubjective character of research encounters entails reflection on the ways I affected participants' self processes (Davies and Spencer 2010, Gupta and Ferguson 1997). One young woman, in particular, with whom I became friends, was both initially frustrated and intrigued by my interest in her, rather than in her sister, whom she saw as a more suitable participant in this research. I met Liana through a school event that was open to the public. When I first interviewed her, after her eighteenth birthday, she was getting ready to graduate and move away to college. She was emotional about this financial, physical, and social transition. She reminded me of my own little sister in the interview, and when she asked for advice, as a graduate student and in the spirit of an older sibling, I honestly gave it. While she repeatedly stated that she was not someone I should be interested in drawing into research as a participant, she did keep in contact with me as an acquaintance. Three years later, she says she wants to write an activist-accented memoir of growing up Armenian American. It is hard for me to determine the degree of influence I have had upon her in this regard, but I must acknowledge that I have been a small, background presence in her life in the transition from a "bad Armenian to study" to autobiographical author of her Armenian American experience (Interview, 2009-2010). In other cases, I have been told that particular questions asked in interviews sparked new ways of thinking about things and about subjectivity. Sometimes, I learned that I was the "mutual person" when two Armenian Americans met for the first time (email to author, 2009-2010).

Like Diane Nelson describes of her research experience in Guatemala, in Armenian American discourse I identified a similar refrain in which people recognized that the "longer a foreigner stays [here,] the harder it is [for her] to write about it," eventually being "overcome by such a sense of complexity and contradiction" (Nelson 1999:31). At an Armenian American writers' conference, a man stood up to respond to this problem that he called one of attachment and detachment. He said he worked as a surgeon and that to demonstrate a healthy attachment to his patients, meaning to love and care for them as whole people, he required himself to intellectually detach from them as people during surgery. In detachment, he said he loved each body part he was working with a mechanical sense or with a sense of wonder, in order to love the person as a whole. He stated,

> "The task of Armenian American writers, too, is to control emotion to prove the end of love. Rather than wallow in your emotion, pull back and use detachment to reveal something more powerful" (conference comment, 2009-2010).

The panelists agreed that Armenian American authors have not displayed this detachment very well, to their detriment, and hinted at an odar's potential. I admit that the more I invest in politics, research, and relationships with Armenian Americans, the more I struggle to maintain an authorial detachment that can adequately do justice to the "here" and "it" Nelson references. At least two moments of field research have been omitted from this dissertation because I feel unable of distancing myself from deeply emotional, personal experiences. Throughout the dissertation, I try to maintain

detachment while honestly representing my postionality and subjective relations as appropriate.

Dissertation Outline

The chapters of this dissertation are arranged into two thematic sections. The first provides the historical and ethnographic context necessary for investigating Armenian American activism and expressions. In chapter 2, I summarize the traditional, which is a nationalist, position toward history and memory of the Armenian genocide focusing on archival knowledge and its production. That chapter explains how Armenian American identity has been treated as a result of genocide and memory of genocide. I introduce the struggle for justice as that effort to legitimize and prove that genocide occurred in order to solicit recognition of that identity. Chapter 3 situates this research project in the Los Angeles region by summarizing the place of Armenian Americans in California, with respect to immigration, class, and race. In the traditional view, institutions of religion, education, and politics have been treated as the structures of cultural survival in a post-genocide diasporan locale. I especially aim to showcase the diversity of the Armenian American population in the Los Angeles area and highlight how interethnic tensions are related to the traditionalist position which has tended toward particular biases and self-reproduction.

The second section elaborates on survivorship in youth activism and expression, including perceived threats to and bearing witness of survivorship. These chapters in general respectively address the nature of survivorship as it is produced and claimed in

youth, the experience of survivorship, and the struggle to have survivorship recognized. They focus on the experience of repertoirial knowledge. Chapter 4 focuses on the subject of the survivor as expressed in a public genocide commemoration, at a film viewing, and in personal accounts. I discuss the practice of conceptualizing the land from which Armenian ancestors were displaced as historic Armenia, perceived as a survivor in its own right. Survivorship exists as a palimpsest and is founded on claimed woundedness. The use of realistic images of both land and bodies in practices of memory enables the production or assumption of this woundedness. Chapter 5 narrows in on a youth hunger strike. Although survivorship can be understood as living in the face of threat, death, or oppression, at this protest, youth embraced feelings of hunger and cold as they fasted in order to bring the past experience they remembered of genocide into their present bodies. They acted in this way as witnesses to the past who simultaneously bore witness and took on the role of traditional, national freedom fighters who resisted denial. In chapter 6, I investigate the claims that denial, as omission, is a threat to survivorship. I explore both ambiguity and assimilation in relation to denial and as the context of production of memory and survivorship. By discussing an interview with a public school teacher, and participants' views of policy and public schools as primary arenas of denial, I show that cultural preservation and Armenian distinction are conceived as means of enacting survivorship.

The conclusion points to an important area for future study: increasingly perceptible discourse that challenges the traditionalist paradigm of survivorship and

memory. It points to questions about conceptualizations of recognition in relation to intersubjectivities and marginalized Armenian American subjectivities. It returns to the legacy of Hrant Dink and his death in questioning reconciliation posited on the recognition of other kinds of survivors.

Chapter 2 | Կա եւ Չկա (There Is and There Is Not): History and Memory of the Armenian Genocide

The phrase that titles this chapter is a traditional one used to begin Armenian tales and legends. Կա եւ Չկա (Ga Yev Chga, Ka Yev Chka) is similar to the English use of "Once upon a time." [8] I use it here to remind that especially in their contested nature, histories of the Armenian genocide are carefully constructed narrations within contemporary political and moral frameworks (Halbwachs 1992, Malkki 1995). The phrase also questions what exists by pointing to what does not and reminds that stories, even as official histories, require the use of imagination. It reminds that just as histories of the Armenian genocide have been built to prove an event, they have been positioned as counterhistories toward those which deny both the event and the presence of its ghosts and survivors in the present. Not only are the histories constructed as antagonist and oppositional, how people in each position imagine each other influences the ways they imagine and identify themselves (Malkki 1995:197). Lastly, the phrase marks absence through what is claimed to be present in survivorship, as in ruins or remains what is here indicates what was or could have been and signifies loss. That is, what there is and what there is not exist together. In this chapter, I present an overview of Armenian American history and memory of genocide that participate in a "struggle for justice" to gain recognition, that is the traditional Armenian American framework of politics and remembrance.

Histories of Ottoman violence to Armenians in the late 19th and early 20th centuries tend to be generalizing (although detailed), paradigmatic, and nationalist. Two polarized narratives or historical frameworks that appear irreconcilable have presented different dates, names, numbers, and ideologies, each narrative influenced by cultural and political goals at the expense of a diversity of memories and feelings about the death of Ottoman Armenians during World War I (Akçam 2012, Biner 2010, Panossian 2006, Suny, et. al. 2011). More than a difference of opinion between historians or nations, for Razmik Panossian, "the word 'debate' is a misnomer" because it implies that the other's position is engaged or considered, where in this case, to request dialogue or to be open to listening to the other's views has itself been a contentious position within each camp (Panossian 2006:229). Pointing to the equally detrimental effects of this history war, an Armenian scholar in France is quoted, "The Turks have been traumatized by constant accusation; the Armenians, by constant victimization" (Temelkuran 2010:162). From both sides, some degree of cultural anesthesia is encouraged, that "render[ing] the Other's pain inadmissible to public discourse and culture" (Feldman 1994:406).

The traditional Armenian argument holds that the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), having emerged from within the government of the Ottoman Empire as a powerful group of reformists and revolutionaries, also known as Young Turks, helped to inspire Turkish nationalism and carried out a predetermined policy of annihilation. In this argument, the contemporary Republic of Turkey is the inheritor of the guilt of the

Ottomans. The Turkish argument fundamentally rejects the intentionality of systematic anti-Armenian Ottoman violence and perhaps is not comfortable claiming full inheritance of every Ottoman legacy. It explicitly refuses accusations of predetermination of any intent as well as the existence of any such policy. Proponents of this thesis state that, with the empire disintegrating and caught up in a world war, CUP leaders engaged in a plan to relocate various minority groups, of whom Armenians were considered a significant political threat. Hence, Ronald Grigor Suny refers to Robert Melson's "provocation thesis" to describe the ascription of Armenian responsibility for violence to Ottoman Armenians (Suny 1993:95, Suny, et. al. 2011). The Turkish argument also includes the claim that war is messy, treating Armenian deaths alongside those of other Ottoman groups as a casualty of war. It is striking that in either argument, there is some agreement that violence occurred on a grand scale, but the interpretation of that violence is what has tended to be disputed.

On the Term *Genocide*

The battles over whose history is more legitimate have been dominated in the United States by lobbyists, politicians, scholars, and activists who experience and reproduce the historical as a legal, linguistic issue. That is, historiography of genocide has become entangled in legal terminology, hinging on contested definitions of the word *genocide* itself. Turkish law makes it illegal to use the word *genocide* in this particular historical narrative. The United States has carefully refrained from using the phrase *Armenian genocide* in a legal, official capacity. As an exercise in power, the

attempt to legitimize one's own narrative through legal terminology is a simultaneous attempt to silence other interpretations and memories of the past, further polarizing positions of memory (Taylor 2003, Trouillot 1996).

The preeminent legal definition is rooted in the writings of Raphael Lemkin whose ideas were adopted and modified by the United Nations. Lemkin wrote of genocide "as 'what happened to the Armenians'" (Phillips 2005:30). The definition demands that intent and evidence both be identified to label a process or event genocide, after which UN signatories are bound to recognize "recourse available to victims under international law" (Kiernan 2007:11). It is because of the claim against intent from the Turkish argument, because of the United Nations Genocide Convention's stance against retroactive application of the term, as well as because of the weight carried by the responsibility of using the word that the Armenian genocide has been thoroughly contested (Kiernan 2007). Marc Nichanian has suggested that Armenian language has the ability to transform this battle by replacing the word *genocide* with a particular, historic phrase. He has favored the use of աղետ (aghed/aghet) translated mainly as catastrophe or calamity. I have heard this term used in casual Armenian-language conversation and it is the title of a Los Angeles-debuted film on Armenian history. It was one of the first words used in the early 20th century to talk about the experience of Ottoman Armenian violence. Certainly before Lemkin's term had been coined in the 1940s, various linguistic expressions were used to refer to what is staunchly today described by many Armenian Americans in English as only,

nothing less, than genocide. Ben Kiernan points to the use of *holocaust* by Americans writing of "Ottoman massacres of Armenian Christians" in 1896, for example (Kiernan 2007:10). For Nichanian, one useful aspect of a term like aghed is that it prevents generalization and trivialization of the Armenian case, emphasizing Armenian memory as unique and pointing to the historical experience of representing memory of violence.

In more recent years, these linguistic predecessors have been reborn to sidestep or diplomatically avoid the legal issues of using *genocide*. U.S. President Barack Obama and Pope John Paul II both attempted to avert the politicization of historical reference, and spoke with the Armenian term մեծ Եղեռն (mets/meds Yeghern), which can be translated as great Calamity or great Crime, in which case it goes further than *aghed* in implying criminal intent or transgression. When Obama, early in his presidency, used the term *meds Yeghern* in a speech in Turkey, he was attacked by proponents of both the Armenian and Turkish arguments, although the Armenian President, it is claimed, stated that Obama was justified in treating *meds Yeghern* as an equal, synonymous term to *genocide* (Khachatourian 2013). Not the English *genocide* or its legal Armenian-language equivalent ցեղասպանություն (tseghasbanutyun), Armenian Americans expressed dissatisfaction and anger at the broken campaign promise of recognition. Turkish media, on the other hand, felt the term went too far, to use an Armenian phrase that has historically been used to reference or gloss genocide. It may be that in casual, everyday, Armenian American discourses, *meds Yeghern* is acceptable but that *genocide* is expected at the legal level where it carries political weight. Another term treated this

way is ջարդ (jard/chart, massacre). Behind the English *genocide*, *chart* was the term I heard most frequently among Armenian Americans to refer to genocide. Another use of replacing the word *genocide* with an Armenian term is that it would take memory out of the legal domain, treating it as legitimate in its own right. Nichanian, along with scholars of genocide such as Jacques Semelin, favors this position, writing that that that it is inappropriate to allow a legal term to qualify memory (Semelin 2009).

In mainstream American discourse as well as broader scholarship, Lemkin's word seems to reference mass violence at the ultimate level or largest scale, even though the legal definition does not rely on such measures. In English, young people often told me that *massacre* implied a smaller scale, one-time event while *genocide* occurred to more people over a larger area and longer time span. As a legal term, the conceptualization of size may be linked to the notion of a crime against humanity which can be envisioned as the ultimate type of mass violence. Sometimes, people may think of genocide as the furthest pole of on a sliding scale of violence at which the opposite pole is located forced assimilation or dislike of difference. Semelin explains this view, writing that genocide occurs in a context of massacres and other episodes of violence when a threshold is crossed, that is with the transformation of regular people, citizens, and neighbors into murderers (Semelin 2009). He locates the intent of genocide in ordinary individuals who are encouraged by ideologies of purification, which is the destruction of that which is other. Alexander Hinton similarly describes genocide at this ultimate level

as the "annihilat[ion] of difference," carried out by ordinary persons (Hinton 2002). [9] He quotes Helen Fein:

> "Genocide is sustained purposeful action by a perpetrator to physically destroy a collectivity directly or indirectly, through interdiction of the biological and social reproduction of group members, sustained regardless of the surrender or lack of threat offered by the victim" [Hinton 2002:4].

Taner Akçam's recent work, utilizing Ottoman archives in Turkey, shows that genocide as destruction and annihilation occurs as a process intertwined with those of simultaneous construction and development of an ideological position and imagined community (Akçam 2012, Hinton 2002, Semelin 2009). For Ronald Suny as well, "the Young Turks [primarily] engaged in a nation-building process" that came to involve genocide (Suny et. al. 2011:35).

During field research, I heard several times that Armenian Americans and scholars of Armenian history have begun to take the genocide for granted, a phrase with a double meaning. First, for one, Richard Hovannisian suggested in a public lecture that the burden of evidencing legally defined genocide has been lifted and that Armenian efforts in this regard have been successful. In a particular "logic of persuasion," a canon exists inclusive of oral histories, eyewitness accounts, diaries and memoirs, and governmental and private archives have been examined to his satisfaction (Chakrabarty 2007:86). In the creation of these materials as sources, of an archive, and of a dominant narrative into which they are placed as supports, Armenian American scholars may also to some degree take for granted the "bundle of silences" that results from "uneven

power" relations in the process of making history (Trouillot 1995:26-27, also Chakrabarty 2007). While silences and absences are part of any voicing and presence, it is ironic that in the effort to keep memory from being rendered silent or invisible, the "historical landscape" is filled "with facts" simultaneously "reducing the room available to other[s]" (Trouillot 1995:49). This leads experts to act on privileged knowledge about the meaning of these facts and their assemblage. Ironically, according to Dipesh Chakrabarty, this kind of historiographic quest and logic do not lead to the experience of social justice (Chakrabarty 2007).

In 1997, the International Association of Genocide Scholars (IAGS) issued a statement declaring the Armenian case to be genocide, but it also went further in "condemn[ing] the denial of the Armenian Genocide by the Turkish government" (Association of Genocide Scholars 1997). The IAGS decision provided validation in the legal domain and can be interpreted as an effect of scholarly efforts as well as a reproduction of the academic frameworks used. In practice, this means that more scholars today speak of "the Armenian genocide" in a less critical manner. Hence, David Kazanjian expresses discomfort in the use of the term *genocide* in the realm of "common sense" where it has "taken on an uncritical air of self-evidence" (Kazanjian 2012:367, also Yoneyama 1999). This is the second meaning of taking the genocide for granted. A youth leader in Los Angeles described in an interview how he has encountered hundreds of Armenian American youth who throw the word genocide around, treating it not as a prize won or as a serious legal matter. He said they use the

word lightly but some so adamant in its singular use (also Panossian 2013). In his words, these youth can likely only speak about the Armenian genocide around the assumption of three generalities: “1915, 1.5 million killed, Ottoman Empire” (Interview 2009-2010). That the year 1915 is taken for granted in its repetition signals the reliance on chronology as a means of producing a moment ready for consumption and marks each commemoration as a repeated, continuous event (Trouillot 1995). Along with *genocide*, the year 1915 and the number 1.5 million name facts said to be recovered from the past and their use demarcates a particular field of power in which subjectivities and contestations are formed (Trouillot 1995).

What is at stake is more than a historical record or legal mark, rather identity and subjectivity that are experienced in relation to contested memory. In the words of Van Krikorian, “The genocide is fundamental to who we are” (Phillips 2005:31). When *the Armenian genocide* is phrased such, it can be taken as a recognition of this identity and subjectivity, and the reverse is also true. One student stated this directly, “In recognizing the genocide, we recognize ourselves” (comment to author, 2009-2010). As Michel-Rolph Trouillot writes, “for reasons that are themselves historical, […] collectivities experience the need to impose a test of credibility on certain events and narratives because it matters *to them* whether those events are true or false” (Trouillot 1995:11). One reason it matters is because when legitimized, the room for what is perceived as socially “permissible lies” shrinks (Hackett and Rolston 2009:371).

Armenian Americans, and especially those in southern California, have been called the most aggressive and vocal in demanding political recognition of the genocide. In *The Bastard of Istanbul*, Elif Shafak's protagonist thinks "Armenian Armenian was no problem […] but Armenian American was someone who despised the Turks" (Shafak 2007:208). Speaking of the popular view in the Armenian American community of southern California, the editor of Los Angeles-based Ianyan Magazine writes sarcastically, "You are either a Christian-loving, Turkey-hating, fighter for Genocide recognition, or you're the enemy" (Aghajanian 2010). This extreme position was evidenced at a lecture on the art of Arshile Gorky at a public museum in Los Angeles, when the art historian speaking interjected an emphatic aside into her presentation. "And it is 'Armenian genocide,'" she said, "with a capital A and a capital G. It is a fact, a proper noun, and it did happen" (Theriault 2010). Half the audience burst into loud applause. In one respect, it seems quite odd and even inappropriate to clap for genocide. In the narrative of the Armenian argument, however, the audience applauded the speaker's political positionality and voice. While in Armenian studies scholarship, a dominant positivist or objective approach has offered a means of distancing historiography from an express political investment, activists and others may not experience to the same degree the need to depoliticize the historical narratives they use (Trouillot 1995). They rather allow experience of woundedness to motivate a "collapse" of the distance between then and now, objectivity and subjectivity, finding historical "accuracy was more a matter of being 'true'" to their memories (Chakrabarty 2007:78).

In 2007, at the first academic conference in which I presented my own views, I was met by two Turkish university students who attempted to convince me that I was overly influenced by the Armenian argument. One asked me point blank in front of an audience why I used the word *genocide*, and they tried to engage me in a justification of my own work. But perhaps it was they who were too influenced by the Turkish one. I recognize that both positions are often too extreme in their presentations of history and yet *genocide* seems to be the best term in English to describe the simultaneous processes of construction of the Turkish nation and destruction of both the Ottoman Empire and Armenian life as such in either polity. Although I draw a great deal of inspiration from the writings and perspective of Nichanian who chooses to use the word *aghed* or *catastrophe* rather than *genocide*, I find it is possible to use word *genocide* while maintaining a critical position on its use and while recognizing the inherent problems of the term itself. In such manner, I choose to use the phrase *Armenian genocide* in this dissertation, not primarily as a political tool but as a representative one.

Explanatory Accounts

In its academic and political drive to prove genocide, the Armenian argument in the United States has long been attentive to explaining how and why genocide occurred related to the need to locate intent and state-sponsored violence. In this framework, Armenian Americans position themselves in the United States as survivors of persecution, as a minority that was historically discriminated against on the basis of linguistic, religious, and other differences. In explaining genocide, then, the Armenian

American community simultaneously creates a contemporary identity as members of the American polity and remind the U.S. public of historic Armenian perceptibility (Mandel 2003, Yoneyama 1999). The right to self-rule as an ethnic minority, the feelings of being tolerated as second-class citizens and national outsiders, the pressure to assimilate into a racially hierarchical multicultural state, and a degree of ambiguity about minority class and power are all factors that Armenian American youth activists express as contemporary concerns as well as reasons for genocide. Additionally, because emphasis is often placed on "explanation" for genocide rather than a search for "healing and acceptance," the community rather than individuals are prioritized, and when the desire to explain is "carried through to its strongest political conclusion," it produces a "combative and confrontational style: telling the story of injustice and pain even in the face of societal reluctance to listen" (Hackett and Rolston 2009:359).

The ideas discussed in this chapter reflect a canon of Armenian genocide research. I focus on the story of the Ottoman Empire and Turks and Armenians within it because these are central to understanding the memory and claims of Armenian Americans. However, I recognize that questions of Armenian identity and subjectivity are larger and ethical issues about the term *genocide* and legitimization of history through linguistic practice abound. I do not address in this section Armenians in the Russian or Persian Empires or in diaspora around the world. I do not address the many details which I have in books before me, but give the main points to demonstrate the general histories that are important to the story of Armenian American activism and

expression in Southern California. I take my lead from Suny in recognizing that both within Armenian communities and across the Turkish-Armenian divide, little disagreement arises over general knowledge (that the majority of Ottoman Armenians were deported, for example). Tensions flare in the search for explanation, significance, naming, and meaning (Suny et. al. 2011).

Semelin points to four factors that propel individuals toward a scale of violent action: identification of scapegoats for national ills, an attempt to reconquer a sense of national glory, living alongside very different people, a desire for national unity, and construction of an ideological enemy figure. Linked to the desire to purify the "us"-group is a transmutation of values caused by resentment of the other so that beliefs become rigid and nonreflexive, passion turns into delusion, protection is conflated with aggression, and progress relies upon death of difference. It is the scale of violence that participates in the construction of an Other leaving little to no room for ambiguity. For this reason, Hinton describes perpetrators of genocide as meaning-makers (Hinton 2002). Kiernan takes a different approach, explaining genocide as resting on four ideological obsessions that motivate violent action: "racism, expansionism, agrarianism, and antiquity" (Kiernan 2007:38). Specifically of the Armenian genocide, he points to "national chauvinis[m]," lack of control over a diminishing empire, and the desire for reconquest (Kiernan 2007:393).

A dominant means by which scholars have explained Ottoman violence to Armenians is through discussion of Turkist ideologies as responsible for victimizing

Ottoman minorities, especially Armenians. To study the Armenian genocide in this perspective is to look to the influence of nationalist discourse and genocidal intent in Ottoman and Young Turk policy and the scholarship that informed it. In this effort, Ziya Gökalp and others have been named procreators of a Turkish and Turkist consciousness whose writings were utilized by CUP party leaders. Rejecting the Tanzimat reforms of a previous Ottoman period, which had nominally encouraged a more equal multiculturalism, Turkism has been said to have bound tightly together language, race, religion, and geography in constructing a modern Turkish nation (Akçam 2006, Hovannisian 1999, Panossian 2006).

A second means by which Ottoman violence toward Armenians has been explained rests on the study of CUP demographic engineering as nation-building. The idea here is that in constructing a new Turkish state, minorities were to be relocated according to a ten percent rule, under which they would make up no more than ten percent of the local population per district (Dündar 2010). This is taken as a policy of forced assimilation and resettlement that turned deadly when CUP leadership recognized that the Armenian population was too numerous to be disseminated according to the details of this policy. For example, Akçam's archival research shows that regions of Syria were stated areas of resettlement for Armenians, but when surviving deportees from Anatolia arrived there, they were placed into refugee camps and no settlements were found suitable for them.[10] This relocation policy has been interpreted as intensified by conditions of war in which the Ottoman leaders felt

politically threatened from without but also from within by Armenians in particular who were possibly viewed as a population of significant difference in close proximity culturally and geographically to other threats, Russia, for example. In Akçam's view, the CUP leadership wanted more than anything to save and build a Turkish state for Turks and made use of religious and racial ideologies as well as the cover of war and a policy of forced assimilation to accomplish it. He describes genocide as a destructive result of this construction.

In the section below, I describe a brief account of the main points emphasized within both of these explanatory frames (Turkism and relocation). I want to clearly state that I wish not to play into an attack on or revision of Turkish historiography, sometimes common to Armenian genocide literature and discourse. I seek to represent an Armenian American scholarly canon. Scholars who have had difficulty accessing Ottoman archives in Turkey may claim that Turkey has something to hide, but the vilification of Turkish society can unfortunately lead into Orientalist representations that stereotypically portray Turks as reactive, illogical, or insincere. While there is work that points to continuities in Turkish policy from the CUP era to at least the 1950s, and while there are serious concerns about Turkey's human rights record, it would be unethical to lump all Turks together in this fashion (Brink-Danan 2010:387, also Akçam 2012, Dündar 2010). Rather, what could emerge from Armenian genocide research is a contribution to critique of empire broadly conceived and highly reflexive.

At an Armenian American youth protest in a public space in Glendale, I found a poster propped up on the sidewalk. Titled “Preconceptions of Genocide,” it depicted photos, probably found online, of four places, a person, and heaps of dead bodies. The pictures were described only in bullet-pointed fashion, so when reading through this poster, the viewer may wonder what these places have to do with this leader or if these massacres took place in these sites. It might not matter, however, because the main point the viewer should take away from this display is that there are several historical objects which indicate that genocide was preconceived, intentional, and planned out ahead of time. The title and the use of the word *genocide* anchor the ultimate meaning of the whole poster.

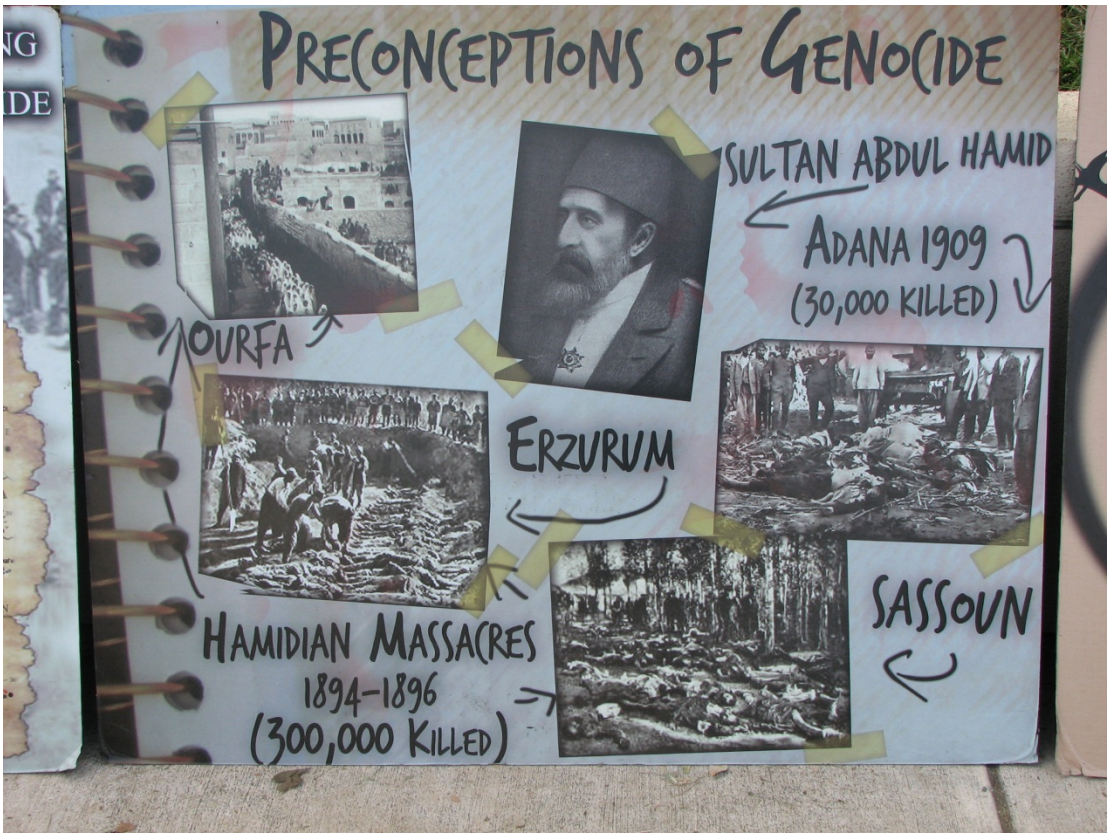

Figure 2.1 “Preconceptions of Genocide” poster on display at a protest in Glendale, California. 2009. Photograph by author.

Sultan Abdul Hamid II, situated at the top, center spot of the poster, came to Ottoman power in 1876, creating a constitutional monarchy called “the apex of the Tanzimat” period, but only two years later he suspended it amidst war with Russia (Hovannisian 1999:27). He has been portrayed as desirous of pre-Tanzimat Islamic rule, commonly referred to as the millet system, in which non-Muslim Ottoman minorities maintained degrees of autonomy as second-class citizens who were tolerated but not welcomed. Named for this Sultan, the Hamidian massacres of the 1890s are often termed precursors or preludes to genocide because of the organization and use of the Hamidiye, a special Ottoman military regiment formed of irregular, and supposedly including Kurdish, cavalry forces that were intended to bulk up the imperial army. The more practical goal of these irregulars, though, in the claimed words of the Sultan was to “settle those Armenians” (Akçam 2006:40, also Özyürek 2007). In 1894, in the face of an Armenian peasant revolt against double taxation in Sasun, Ottoman military was sent to force order. But the government was criticized from within the empire as well as from without for killing too many people and acting brutally. The narrative that typically begins with this and other similar cases of violence leads straight into the story of Adana, taking place over a decade later. Connecting the two are increasing instances of violence to Armenians which are described as massacres or pogroms. According to Akçam, the Ottoman state “unleashed its attacks on the slightest provocation” and “directed attackers to [Armenian] targets” (Akçam 2006:44-46).

Some have suggested that class conflict played a role in the increasingly hostile attitudes toward Armenians. To focus on this aspect of anti-Armenian practices is to study patron-client relationships and property transfers. Stephan H. Astourian suggests that because many of the wealthiest Armenians attained their positions as Ottoman elites due to clientage, they lacked actual power (Hovannisian 1999). This then means that while they may have been criticized for their financial wealth or class attitudes, they often operated in line with, not against, Ottoman elite politics. Along with Fuat Dündar, Akçam claims that the CUP planned to remove Armenians from their property, including homes, fields, and businesses, in order to place incoming Muslim and/or Turkish refugees after the Balkan Wars (Dündar 2010). This could be interpreted as a practice of redistribution, taking away from the stereotypically wealthy minority and giving to the suffering Turk. The perception that Armenians held significant power, alongside possible anger at the Tanzimat reforms which presented a possible means for Christian minorities to increase power, is what may have allowed the Ottoman leadership to rally masses against minorities. Kiernan points to the importance of peasants' perceptions of elites when he writes of the role of idealized agrarianism in the move toward genocide. He links the image of the peasant to the rising notion of the "Turk" itself, writing that it "had a connotation in Turkey of 'rural' or 'mountain people'" (Kiernan 2007:405).

Anti-Christian sentiment has been described as a tool used by Ottoman and CUP leaders to rally and inspire the Muslim Turkish masses or to justify for the masses

ideologies of nation-building. Descriptions of the Adana massacre of 1909, for example, mention the use of minarets for vantage points from which to shoot down Christians in the streets and the burning of Christian schools and churches. Under the resettlement plan for demographic engineering, actions were taken to "replace Christians with Muslims in traditional economic roles" and to bar them from national associations (Akçam 2006:91). Forced conversion to Islam was encouraged and in some places was a means to avoid deportation and resettlement, and some Armenians were compelled to change their names to traditionally Muslim, Turkish, or Arabic ones. This practice perhaps became so widespread as a means of escaping persecution that it lost its value and perhaps created confusion. According to Marcy Brink-Danan, the willingness to adopt a new name became representative of "sneaky attempts by minorities to dissimulate as 'real Turks'" (Brink-Danan 2010:388).

The problem of minority religion, specifically Christianity, for the Ottoman state and for Turkism was intensified by relations with Europe and the United States, which were permeated with Orientalist views of Central Asian, Mediterranean, and Middle Eastern peoples classified as non-Western and non-white. A so-called inferiority complex and a love-hate relationship with the West have been attributed to the personified Ottoman empire of the mid-19th century, the "Sick Man of Europe." Simon Payaslian writes that the Ottoman government had become increasingly and excessively nationalist, aggressive, and suspicious in relation to Christians, perhaps in reaction to perceived outside, that is, European and U.S., preference for them (Payaslian 2007).

One of the defining characteristics of traditional Armenian identity has been Christianity. Many Armenian Americans have told me with pride that Armenia was the "first Christian nation," formally adopting the religion in the early fourth century. In the millet system, Armenians were represented to the Sultanate by the Catholicos, head of the Armenian Apostolic Church. And it was through the Church that education, inheritance, marriage, and civil life were governed, so that Armenian political relations with the state were mediated by a minority religion which served as a significant identifier of difference. Two factors complicated this status in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. First, the Armenian community was experiencing an increased political nationalism. During the Tanzimat, the Armenian National Constitution had been ratified by Ottoman law, allowing the Armenian millet to operate as a democracy to itself yet within the empire. The constitution provided for a General Assembly that was meant to secularize the Armenian minority in representation to the Ottoman government, distinguishing itself from other Christian minorities.

From the 1870s, some within the Ottoman Armenian community had sought to work for independence. Mkrtich Khrimian, for example, is remembered for attending the negotiations of the Treaty of Berlin that ended the Russo-Turkish War as a representative of the Armenian minority. For not receiving the attention he had hoped, he famously scribbled a note of protest at the signing. In Istanbul, it is claimed he spoke of "the 'dish of liberty' from which Serbs and Bulgarians had served themselves 'using iron ladles' (weapons and force)" (Panossian 2006:172). Petitions were made by

Ottoman Armenians asking for support and protection from Russia. Defense of the Fatherland was founded to organize self-defense. In the late 19th century, political parties as such were founded, with influence from Armenians in France and Russia. The Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) was founded in 1890, the same year as the Hamidiye regiments, calling for rights and reforms within the Ottoman system. Although advocating Armenian protection and entitlement, the ARF was likely also interested in a Turkish revolution and reform of the Ottoman state as Ottoman citizens.

The second factor that, alongside nationalism, complicated that status of Armenians as a religious minority was the increasing interference into Ottoman-Armenian relations by European parties. Dating to at least the 16th century, Christian minorities were legally able to establish protections within the Ottoman Empire that were enforced and maintained by European powers. The Ottomans have been described as belittled and upset by this practice they were forced into, a practice that threatened the sovereignty of the state. In the mid-19th century, Ottoman Armenians held statuses as protected subjects of Britain, Russia, and Germany. This prevented them from being tried in the Ottoman judicial system and their homes from search by Ottoman authorities. Interpreted by Akçam, the memoirs of Edmund Hornby, British Consular Court judge in Istanbul in the 1850s, reveal the number of "so-called British protected subjects" under Ottoman rule to be "little short of a million" (Akçam 2006:26). Razmik Panossian claims that Armenians came to view the West as obliged to assist them on the basis of shared, dominant religion, Christianity, convincing

themselves that European powers should, “and therefore will,” help the Armenian minority when needed (Panossian 2006:189, also Mirzoyan 2010).

To the threatened Ottoman state, humanitarian workers and Christian missionaries from Europe and the United States might have been seen as spies or instigators of anti-Ottoman sentiment who placed themselves among Armenians. By the turn of the 20th century, more than one hundred American missionaries were in the Ottoman Empire running churches and schools largely within Armenian communities. In the late 19th century, Clara Barton led the American Red Cross on an early international mission to the Ottoman Empire in order to assist victims and refugees of Ottoman oppression and pogroms. American humanitarian discourse increasingly narrowed on the figure of the “starving Armenian” as evidence of the stereotypically savage nature of the Ottoman Turk. From the pages of *Woman’s Journal* to the speeches of the 1896 Republican candidates for President and to eyewitness accounts of Ottoman pogroms in *The New York Times*, Ottoman Armenians were visible as victims in public spaces (Balakian 2003, New York Times 1894, New York Times 1896a). Peter Balakian quotes President Herbert Hoover as saying, “the name Armenia was in the front of the American mind … known to every schoolchild only a little less than England” (Balakian 2003:282).

Advocacy in the form of funding by large organizations in the United States, such as Near Eastern Relief, was intended to get information out of the Ottoman state and into the hands of journalists, to provide food and shelter, to help locate missing family

members, and importantly here to provoke international and domestic attention to the Armenian situation. According to Balakian, it was during President Grover Cleveland's term that debate about how to handle the Armenian situation first arose in Washington, D.C. (Balakian 2003). The Cullom Resolution promoted an indirect strategy of intervention by providing for the United States to officially pressure European powers to honor their prior commitments to Christians in the Ottoman Empire (New York Times 1896b). Foreshadowing future relations between Washington and Turkey, Balakian claims that the Ottoman Ambassador to the United States protested the Resolution on grounds that Ottoman identity would be offended and a potential breakdown in U.S.-Ottoman relations was at stake (Balakian 2003). Russia, which had engaged the Ottoman state in war, took a more direct stance. In 1914, at the behest of the Armenian Church in Russia, the tsar sent an Armenian delegation under the leadership of Boghos Nubar to Europe to advocate for the partitioning of Anatolia. Germany, France, Britain, and other European states apparently decided to move forward with the plan to mediate reform in the Eastern Ottoman provinces. Under the Armenian Reform Agreement, the provinces heavily populated by Armenians were to fall under the administration of the Ottoman Minister of the Interior, divided into two large regions whose management would each be supervised by a different European power (Akçam 2012, Panossian 2006, Payaslian 2007, Suny et. al. 2011).

For Akçam, the threat of this reform to Ottomans was described as an Armenian problem to be resolved (Akçam 2012). In contrast to anti-Greek violence, it was perhaps

the notion of Armenian protection and claims to rights that provoked CUP leaders to elaborate their plans for deportation, resettlement, and assimilation (Akçam 2012). A major claim of the Turkish argument holds that Armenians were removed from Ottoman territories for two reasons: for their wartime protection and as a result of nationalist, revolutionary activities. Yet the effect has been identified as a genocidal violence that took different local forms and was understood differently at various levels of government.

Armenian American and U.S. histories of the Armenian genocide rely heavily upon survivor and eyewitness testimonies and documents in U.S. archives. Although archives in Germany, France, and the Jerusalem Patriarchate contain pertinent documents and have been utilized in scholarly accounts, U.S. sources provide a unique perspective. In the first years of World War I, the United States maintained neutrality. U.S. citizens were thereby able to remain in Ottoman territory even when others were expelled. From 1914 to 1916, humanitarian workers, missionaries, journalists, and diplomats wrote letters, diaries, and other communications giving testimony about atrocities. Reverend F. H. Leslie, for example, sent written communications to U.S. Consul Jesse Jackson in Aleppo, detailing events in Urfa and requesting financial aid for Armenian survivors of violence (Akçam 2012, Balakian 20003, Papazian 1994, Payaslian 2007). U.S. Ambassador Henry Morgenthau received collections of communications from various sources during his service, from 1913 to 1916 (Balakian 2003, Hovannisian 2007, Suny et. al. 2011). He is said to have repeatedly requested assistance from

President Woodrow Wilson, and according to Balakian wrote that "the annihilation of a Christian race" must be stopped and that "a campaign of race extermination is in progress" (Balakian 2003:277, also Armenian National Institute 1998-2013a, Armenian National Institute 1998-2013b). After resignation from his post, Morgenthau published a memoir by the name of *The Murder of a Nation*, later retitled *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*, in which he describes his perspective and gives testimony to atrocities. This text is foundational to the understanding of the Armenian genocide in US memory and in Armenian genocide research in the United States. More recently, scholars including Suny have been able to work alongside Turkish and Turkish American historians toward a more multifaceted perspective. Akçam has carried out research in the Prime Ministerial Office of the Ottoman Archives in Turkey, in which he presents areas of agreement between U.S. and Ottoman sources (Akçam 2012).

The Use of Holocaust Representation

The Holocaust has become a standard for measuring atrocity and representation of genocide (Huyssen 2000, Nichanian 2009, Zelizer 1998). As a paradigm, it operates to create a particular gaze toward atrocity and has the ability to shape or construct particular subjectivities in relation to historical atrocity. In seeking legitimation of the Armenian genocide in the United States, the Holocaust is often referenced to demonstrate similarity in measure and representation and to create parallels between subject positions of survivors. The result is a common notion of the Armenian genocide as a forerunner to the Holocaust, although those with a critical eye find in this

comparison areas for future research that could redirect the historiography of the Armenian genocide. I find it common in not only activist discourse, but also generally in Armenian American discourse, the notion that lack of recognition and response to the Armenian genocide led to the Holocaust and other genocides. People say, “Unless you acknowledge the mistakes of the past, you are doomed to repeat them” (comment to author, 2009-2010).

Scholars including Kiernan and Akçam have discussed the alliance between Germany and the Ottoman Empire during World War I, loosely suggesting continuities in German-inspired violence (Akçam 2006, Akçam 2012, Hovannisian 1999, Kiernan 2007). Kiernan, for example, finds it significant that Rudolph Hess, who later played a key role in Nazi operations, served as a German soldier in the Ottoman Empire during World War I (Kiernan 2007). Enver Pasha, who has been credited with establishment of the Ottoman-German alliance, was a CUP leader who served as Ottoman Minister of War during the genocide, and he also served as a military attaché in Berlin in 1909. According to Kiernan, he was “well placed to learn [… of the] destruction of a recalcitrant ethnic group, the Herero of Southwest Africa” at the hands of German imperialists (Kiernan 2007:395). This line of thinking attributes responsibility, beyond Ottoman and Turkist leaders, to “German empathy for genocidal violence” and philosophies of “volk,” even though it must be noted that it was a German military officer by the name of Armin T. Wegner who provided some of the only known photographs of Armenian survivors of genocide at serious personal risk (Balakian 2003, Miller and Miller 1993). For Hilmar

Kaiser, it is complicated to compare German responsibility toward the Holocaust with that toward the Armenian genocide as Germans (including government, business, and individuals) had no uniform policy toward Ottoman atrocities as they were occurring. Rather, German "involvement in the Armenian genocide covers a spectrum ranging from active resistance to complicity" in a context of cross-cutting interests (Hovannisian 1999:95-96).

It is common in Armenian American scholarly and public discourse to hear cited this quote, attributed to Adolf Hitler: "Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?" The use of Hitler's words is meant to provide continuity between the Armenian genocide and the Holocaust, and the statement is treated as a fact in the historical production of the Armenian genocide. Generally, the quote is used to remind that if the Armenian genocide is not remembered, not recognized, then genocides will continue to happen in the future and history will repeat itself. However, as Wolf Gruner points out, the quote is not necessarily literally about remembrance (Gruner 2010). It attributes Hitler as asking who "speaks," not who remembers, the Armenians. Gruner's work reminds that silence is not always indicative of the banishment of memory and his research reveals that the "Armenian cruelties" were remembered popularly in Germany in the 1930s and may have even operated as a paradigmatic standard for thought about atrocity (Gruner 2010). The quote references silence, or what some would call social forgetting or humiliated silence, in the face of memory and the unstated ambiguities of responsibility (Connerton 2008, Shaw 2007). Public silence or secrecy can result from

feelings related to remembered complicity in the atrocities (Passerini 2003). Gruner also reminds that Hitler voiced this question in 1939 in reference to the invasion of Poland not in a conversation about the final solution or Jewish problem, and this complicates the search for continuity and comparison of intent to annihilate as well as the attack on Turkish historiography as amnesiac (Gruner 2010).

A prime example of the use of Holocaust representational strategy comes from a 2010 airing of *60 Minutes*. Facing a large and diverse national audience, Peter Balakian took viewers with him to Der Zor, Syria, where he explained to viewers that the site is the Armenian equivalent of Auschwitz. This is repeated once by himself and again by the show's host, as if the repetition will create a sense of weight or shock. Then Balakian, picking up a bone from the sand blowing around, refers to the death of Armenians in "primitive gas chambers," desert caves in which forced smoke inhalation was the means of mass death (Gavshon and Magratten 2010). Balakian's comparison seems powerful for a few reasons. He points to familiar names in Holocaust discourse and gives viewers images of Armenians that strongly resonate with national American memory of the Holocaust. The image of countless bones in piles of sand points to the theme of mass death and parallels piles of teeth, shoes, suitcases, and bodies that appear in U.S. history textbooks, museums, and films to visualize the Holocaust. The image of caves called gas chambers points to the theme of organized and systematic imprisonment and then murder by asphyxiation.

As this example shows, the Holocaust is more often invoked to represent the "what" and "how" rather than the "why" of genocide. Along with concentration camps and gas chambers, forced labor units, the use of special para- or extra-military forces, postwar trials, resistant uprisings, and mass deportation are used to describe the Armenian genocide in the context of the Holocaust. Deportation as the main event or as the exemplary experience of genocide is often used across a variety of narratives, scholarly, popular, and familial. For Donald and Lorna Touryan Miller, as well as for Akçam, Armenian deportation was a means of "death by attrition" where the term signified "annihilation" (Miller and Miller 1993:42, also Akçam 2012). After the conscription and disarmament of Armenian men, the dismissal of Ottoman officials of Armenian heritage from their posts, and the ban on Armenian political party meetings, large-scale deportations began in early 1915. According to the "Fact Sheet" on the Armenian genocide available online via the University of Michigan, Armenians "were marched off to concentration camps in the desert" (Fact Sheet 2012).

The danger of reliance on knowledge and representation of the Holocaust is that the "energiz[ation]" of the discourse of genocide in the Holocaust paradigm may also "block insight into specific local histories" (Huyssen 2000:24). The Holocaust is used as a framework into which scholars and activists attempt to legitimize the Armenian genocide in the United States, but without that agenda, a comparative study of genocides could show unique, complex processes that have the ability to unsettle claims in both Turkish and Armenian nationalist arguments (Suny et. al. 2011). One area for

which this is especially accurate is that of assimilation, which does not play much of a role in the history of the Holocaust but which, for women and children, was a key process of the Armenian genocide.

Armenians were taken as wives by Turkish men or brought into Turkish households as adopted children or servants (Akçam 2012, Biner 2010, Çetin 2008, Derderian 2005, Miller and Miller 1993). This has been called an explicit attack on the reproduction of the "Armenian ethnos" (Derderian 2005:3). Some Armenian women remained in Turkey for the rest of their lives as Turks with grandchildren who knew themselves only as Turks (Çetin 2008). Others left these circumstances when they had the chance, even leaving behind babies and children who had been born in order to find their Armenian families. Laws supporting assimilation in the Ottoman Empire prohibited public use of Armenian language, education in Armenian schools, Armenian religious practices, and sometimes the public association of Armenians (Akçam 2012). It is particularly this assimilationist element of genocide that is partially responsible for producing the anti-assimilationist attitudes within the post-genocide Armenian American community. In this way, the use of comparison to the Holocaust plays into the legal, political efforts toward recognition but perhaps does a disservice to fostering understanding or alliance with Armenian American activists.

Spatialization of Genocide

One heavily reproduced image, utilized by a variety of Armenian American and U.S. organizations, persons, and websites, is a map of deportation routes showing

holding locations, camps, and sites of massacre in an effort to show the total experience of the Ottoman Armenian deportees across the empire and to show the scale of the event. It may also connote intention and planning if read as a map of preconceived, directed movements. When compared with some maps that were created in a mapping initiative called Geographies of the Holocaust led by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial and Museum, the simple symbolism stands out. The bigger the circle, the more people killed. The arrows go only one direction, moving into and out of the circles. Some arrowed lines continue out of the circles into nothingness. In participation in a Holocaust paradigm, representations like this one of the geography of the Armenian genocide are powerful because they are abstract, generalized, and "ideological organization[s] of the spatial dimension of […] violence" (Feldman 1991:36). In them, "space itself functions as a mnemonic artifact" and subjectivity is articulated in relation to representation of violence (Feldman 1991:27). A webpage titled Mapping Armenian Genocide, part of the website of The Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute in Armenia, has collected five such maps, all produced by different organizations, and four of them have the same pattern of blood red circles and arrows superimposed on a political terrain (Mapping Armenian Genocide 2007-2011). These can motivate practices of memory and history but simultaneously screen or elide them as they transform into simulacra (Huyssen 2000, Nichanian 2009, Trouillot 1995).

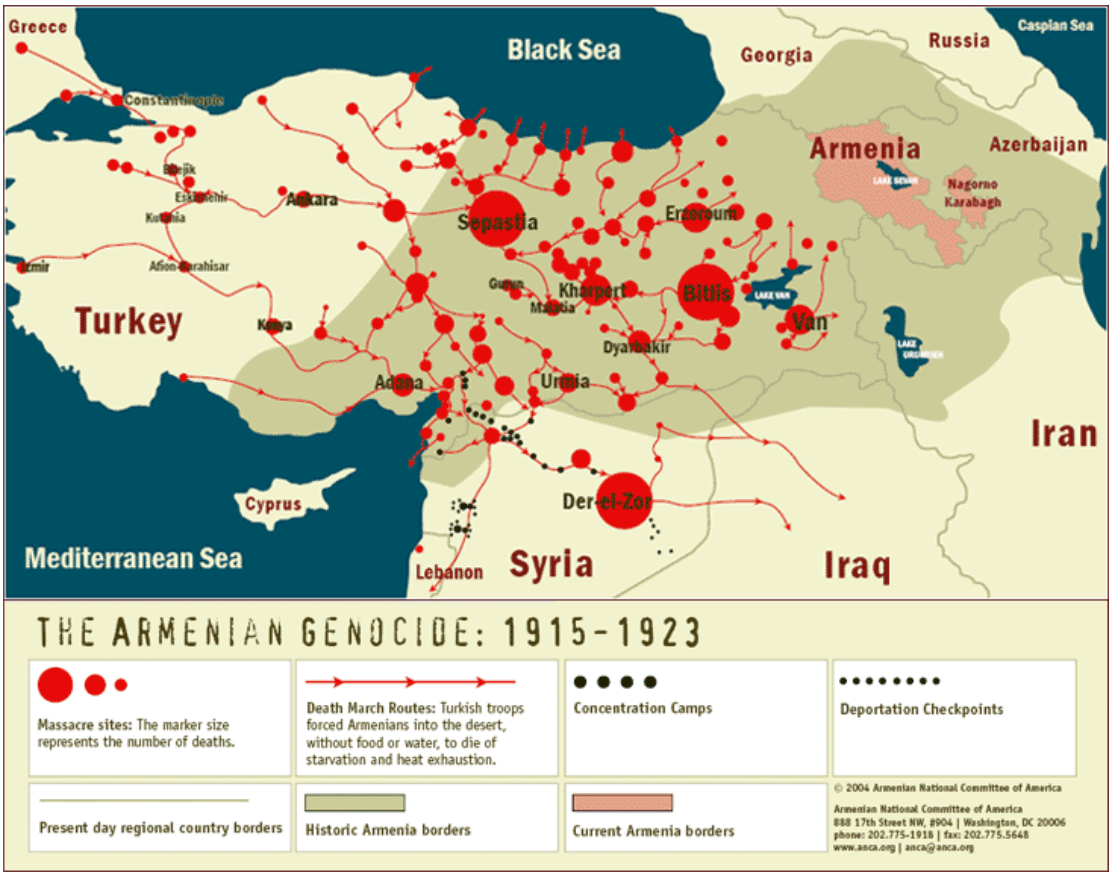

Figure 2.2 Map of the Armenian genocide (Armenian National Committee of America 2004).

In the historical context of the Holocaust and Zionism, the state of Israel can be interpreted as a homeland constructed for displaced survivors, produced through the international cooperation of imperial powers which privileged the Jews as a national people group. In contrast, the map above portrays a lost homeland which is often called "historic Armenia." It no longer exists as such except in memory or nationalist practices, yet like in Zionist imagination, it plays a role in the production of a space as legitimately and singularly owned through various forms of rights (religious, compensatory, etc.). This image shows that genocide occurred in that homeland and was the cause of displacement from it. In Armenian American discourse, genocide is inclusive of deterritorialization and loss of political identity. In youth activism, land claims are thus intertwined with narratives of genocide as well as in efforts to gain recognition. Such claims are sustained through knowledge of diplomatic treaties and borders, which are called upon to create continuity with the past, showing that Armenian Americans are dispersed remnants of genocide. In fact, two treaties in particular "have entered Armenian national consciousness to such a degree that it is impossible to talk about modern Armenian identity – especially in the diaspora – without mentioning them" (Panossian 2006:247).

The Treaty of Sevres, first, has been frequently referenced as the honorable treaty under which parties should be diplomatically bound rather than the Treaty of Lausanne which is politically recognized as superseding it (Balakian 2003, Başer, Hovannisian 2003, Panossian 2006, Payaslian 2007). Under the Treaty of Sevres, the

Ottoman government was to recognize an independent Armenian state and to respect an Ottoman-Armenian border drawn by the United States. President Woodrow Wilson is remembered in Armenian American discourse as a supporter of an independent Armenia, to act as a U.S. zone of influence, that would include a significant amount of territory claimed as a homeland, land that today lies in eastern Turkey. The United States did not ratify the Treaty of Sevres, however. During the Turkish National Movement and War of Independence at the end of and after World War I, this treaty was rejected by Turkish leaders. In creating a new Republic of Turkey, the government claimed not to be accountable to all the policies, practices, and claims of the Ottomans. The Treaty of Lausanne resulted as a renegotiation of the war powers with Turkey, referenced in Armenian American discourse as Turkey's second chance. This history is reproduced by youth activists both to construct modern Turkey as an enemy as well as to point to American betrayal at the loss of a homeland.

Second is the Treaty of Kars because the Treaty of Lausanne recognized it as valid and it has been given legitimate authority by contemporary Turkey, Georgia, and Azerbaijan, whose states were involved in the 1921 signing (Marashlian 2009, Panossian 2006, Payaslian 2007, Suny 1993). It placed the Turkish border quite east from where Wilson had earlier planned. A significant portion of what is considered historic Armenia was integrated into Turkey under the Treaty of Kars. Between two empires in the midst of remaking themselves, the first Republic of Armenia was born in 1918. This Armenia has been described as a tiny, landlocked corner of historic Armenia. In 1920, however,

the independent Armenia was brought into what became the Soviet Union. The Treaty of Kars verified the Turkish-Soviet border. A political Armenian territory existed as a Soviet Socialist Republic until a second independence in 1991. Nationalist, post-Soviet discourse encouraged an open reconsideration of what territory should belong to, could realistically be claimed by, the new Republic of Armenia. Alla Mirzoyan points to the present-day date that some celebrate as Independence Day, May 28, as an "accomplish[ment of] the mental integration of 1918 and 1991 into an uninterrupted experience of independence through collective forgetting of the Soviet time" because on that date Armenia declared independence in 1918 not 1991 (Mirzoyan 2010:13).

From 1988 and into the early nineties, war between Armenia and Azerbaijan intensified the questions of homeland and reproduced the notion of Armenian homeland in the context of genocidal displacement. Nagorno-Karabagh was governed as an autonomous oblast in the Soviet Union with a mixed population of ethnic Armenians and Azeris. As Soviet power was being challenged by various nationalities, Armenia and Azerbaijan each attempted to claim the oblast for itself, with the result being outbreak of war. Armenians who lived in Azerbaijan experienced pogroms and episodes of violence in the cities of Sumgait and Baku, and Azeris were massacred at the hands of the Armenian military in Khojaly, Nagorno-Karabagh (Platz 1999, Rutland 1994). In Armenian American nationalist discourse, youth have used *Sumgait* to demonstrate claims that a genocide of Armenians is still ongoing. In doing so, they allow memory of genocide to take on an ideological, spatial dimension (Feldman 1991). Violent anti-

Armenian processes are situated in Turkey and the Caucasus while assimilatory threats are more likely to be placed in a diasporan minority context. I have also frequently heard that Nagorno-Karabagh is the last piece of homeland for which Armenians can fight. In claiming this territory as primarily or truly Armenian, people forget a certain "pastness" of Nagorno-Karabagh under Soviet times. That is, they imagined and produce the land as empty of others in historical time and space, a political forgetting. They incorporate the contemporary struggle into an ongoing historical attempt to deterritorialize and destroy Armenians (Mirzoyan 2010:13). Turkey has supported Azerbaijan's position and requested Armenia withdraw from the independent and pro-Armenian Republic of Nagorno-Karabagh. Turkey thus closed its border to Armenia contributing to the difficult economic situation in which independent Armenia has found itself. Turkey's action was presented by Armenian American lobbies in Washington as a "continuation of ever-present threat to Armenia's physical survival" (Mirzoyan 2010:141). Effectively, Turkey continues to be conceived as ill-intentioned toward Armenians and positioned as a polar opposite to Armenian interests and claims.

I have frequently encountered the claim that much of historic Armenia has been destroyed or emptied of Armenian presence. The Armenia that exists today is often treated as a remnant and a trace. It is a survivor, like those who remain after genocide, in the face of attempts to destroy Armenia. Ծիծեռնակաբերդ (Tsitsernakaberd), the national genocide memorial and monument in Armenia, stands as a materialization of this conceptualization. On a hill overlooking Yerevan, which is the capital, 12 stone slabs

are arranged in a circle, falling inward toward each other. Inside them, an eternal flame constantly burns, and this is where visitors lay red and white flowers in memory. From within the circle or from without, the slabs appear to form the base of a massive spire, if they could stand a little straighter. They have been cut down, however. This side of the memorial is said to represent the losses of genocide and displacement and each slab marks a lost territory of historic Armenia (comments to author, 2009-2010). The land remains, represented by the base, but it is wounded and ruined. Next to this circle, one lone spire rises. Though thinner, smaller in its base, it is the remnant that continues to exist and grow as Armenian. It is the Republic of Armenia that persists. More, it is the spirit of those who survive as Armenian.

Figure 2.3 Tsitsernakaberd, Armenian Genocide Monument and Memorial in Yerevan, Armenia. 2008. Photo by author.

Chapter 3 | Armenian Americans in the Los Angeles Region

> "[…] see if they will not laugh, sing and pray again. For when two of them meet anywhere in the world, see if they will not create a New Armenia." [Garabed 2009]

That little ethnographic literature of Armenian American experiences exists may be related to both ambiguity and confusion about what it means to "be Armenian." For some, Armenian populations in the diaspora are "demographic ghosts" and "hidden minorities," groups that are structurally or officially invisible, groups for whom there is a lack of data (Aghanian 2007:4, Bakalian 1994:ix,4). While Armenians may have seen "their postgenocide plight as exceptional," others may have been "blind to the distinction" (Mandel 2003:20). Additionally, an assemblage of generational, migratory, linguistic, and political factors perpetuate degrees of imperceptibility and diversity so that, for both high school peers as well as academics, I have detected an underlying attitude of complacency about the uncertainty of exactly "who Armenians are" and "where they come from" (Yacoubian 2009). One high school student said, "They are all Armenian so why can't they speak the same language? It's confusing" (comment to author, 2009-2010). A professor and expert of Eurasian studies instructed me that "it is too difficult and complicated to do research on Armenians" (comment to author, 2009-2010). While his statement is potentially insulting, I believe he was trying to defend his academic avoidance of Armenia by pointing to the complex dynamics of Armenian experiences. Marc Nichanian is somewhat understanding of this position when he writes, "Because of the extreme diversity of Armenian 'identities,' the enterprise of

exploring their intricacies could be considered at first glance as doomed to failure" (Nichanian 2006:xi).

Armenians have long been described as a dispersed group, and even relying upon stricter definitions, have often been labeled a classic diaspora,

> "those people with or without a state whose […] migration traditions had not affected the persistence of a permanent collective conscience rooted in an enduring reference to a history, a land, or a religion" or "collective experience" in dispersion from a homeland (Dufoix 2008:38, 62, also Clifford 1994, Ossman 2007, Pattie 1999).

Termed a "diaspora of diasporas" by Denise Aghanian, diasporan nodes that were traditionally seen as birthed via post-genocide dispersion outside of Anatolia and the Caucasus have now themselves experienced their own diasporas (Aghanian 2007:4). For Ronald Suny, the "Armenian diaspora," "despite its fractures and formlessness," exists as "an act of imagination and intellectual and political construction" that has demanded recognition of its "salience" (Suny 1993:214, also Appadurai 1996). There has been "no single clearly defined center and periphery acknowledged by all Armenians," and "Armenia" has typically through centuries existed from and within particular, even opposing, perspectives (Pattie 1999:5). For Gayatri Spivak, Armenia has been "pluralized in diasporas for many centuries, guarding its nationalism" in "interstices" of empire (Spivak 2008:99, 117-118). She writes, "Any theory of […] hybridity pales into insignificance when we consider the millennial ipseity of the Armenian, existing in uneasy double bind with the hybridity imposed by the locale" (Spivak 2008:99, 117-118). She sees the Armenian case as a model for understanding a global context in

which translocal connections are increasingly part of quotidian identity-making processes (also Kasbarian 2013). Further, transnational and translocal knowledge practices are claimed by the nation in nation-building in the context of diaspora (Schwenkel 2009). For Nichanian, this ipseity, unique and singular way of being in the world, rests on the expert Armenian practice of "interioriz[ing] their own dispersion, their own otherness to themselves" (Nichanian 2005:xii). He views, as a result, Armenian identity to be at once adaptive and rigid as well as fragmented but united (Nichanian 2005: xii).

To say that a person is a member of "the diaspora" is considered an ascription to an illusory "ideology of unity" in Sarah Mekdjian's view or as a "superficial" community in Carina Karapetian Giorgi's terms (Mekdjian 2008:46, Giorgi 2012:68, also Chahinian 2013). While earlier Armenian migrants and emigrants may have seen their colonies as exilic outposts and awaited return to a homeland, more recent diasporans are described as taking the diaspora as a permanent state of an Armenian transnation or a "multilocal nation" (Panossian 2006:384 Tölölyan 2001). Although one could argue that the Armenian diaspora is an "'emblem of transnationalism' because [its] existence questions the notion of borders at the heart of the definition of the nation," the "articulati[on] of a "distinctive, political voice" as a minority has relied upon an ethnic, nationalist identification (Mandel 2003:16,119, also Malkki 1992). Razmik Panossian writes that the construct of the modern Armenian nation, which occurred through an "awakening," "was carried out mostly in diasporan communities," so that Armenian identities have

long been situated in or constituted by "multilocal process[es]" (Panossian 2006:38). In this way, diasporan "Armenianness is far removed from the homeland" and has been able to operate as an identity of categorical purity in its displaced imaginings of unity and nation (Panossian 2006:8, also Malkki 1992, Mekdjian 2008). Further, because Armenia's history is told as one of constant subjugation and division, claiming sovereignty only partially in a few periods prior to genocide,

> "in the absence of [a] state, to be a[n] [Armenian] citizen has meant to be a member in the national community – a community defined as existing in struggle" (Feldman 2007:150, also Khalili 2005).

For these reasons, Levon Abrahamian focused his ethnographic work on tracing particular "pathways" of Armenian identity and subjectivity, and Anny Bakalian has drawn attention to means of feeling symbolically Armenian in diaspora (Abrahamian 2005, Bakalian 1994). I understand Abrahamian's pathways as routes, traces, and practices. For example, he takes memorialization to be one pathway to Armenian subjectivity and identity, and he shows the development of specific monuments and museums to be linked directly to the production of national and historic consciousness of a people. Bakalian's sociological work emphasizes nostalgia and pride as markers of feeling Armenian that are displayed through easily visible symbols and performances. She suggests that, for some in the United States, "Armenianness is manifested during one's leisure time," often as a "convenience" (Bakalian 1993:7,46). Although this could be interpreted negatively if a person infers that feeling Armenian is somehow less than "being" Armenian or if embracing such feelings in leisure time trivializes them, she

means to show that “Armenianness changes generationally” away from being “ascribed, unconscious, or compulsive” (Bakalian 1993:6). Suny seems to agree that the “majority of diaspora Armenians” “‘consider Armenian ethnicity as a voluntary form of association’” (Suny 1993:217). These are perspectives that look to agency and constantly realigned subjectivities, and in this regard, I draw on the work of both scholars in that they are not necessarily interested in what it means to “be” Armenian but rather to become, feel, and act Armenian in particular times and spaces. For Nichanian, the value in this perspective is that it can show there is “a ‘dispersed,’ ‘agonistic,’ ‘divisive’ way of being a nation” (Nichanian 2005:xii, also Chahinian 2013). In this dissertation, I aim to carry forward Nichanian’s perspective while nevertheless showing that Armenian American identity is not to be taken primarily as a “hobby” though perhaps achieved or voluntary. It is a means of resistance and of remembrance with real-life consequences such as positive self-esteem and social success (comment to author, 2009-2010, Yacoubian 2013).

This dissertation bears some similarity to the research conducted by Ulrike Ziemer, who has carried out ethnographic work among the Armenian community, focusing on youth, in the Krasnodar region of southern Russia, a multiethnic space with approximately a quarter million Armenians as one of the largest minority groups. Her work finds affiliation with diaspora to involve “ever-changing representations which provide an ‘imaginary coherence’ for a net of flexible identities” (Ziemer 2009:414). She claims that Armenian youth in Krasnodar embrace a cosmopolitan attitude, in that their

Russian identity is not claimed at the expense of belonging to others but rather in the attempt to belong to "more than one ethnic and cultural locality simultaneously" (Ziemer 2009:414). While life in Krasnodar calls forth participation in a multicultural "here and now," the many "there's" of homeland and places of collective memory call upon "individual narratives of translocation or dislocation" (Ziemer 2009:415, also Clifford 1994). In her use of theories of cosmopolitanism, I see that she ultimately also studies "pathways" to Armenian subjectivity as intertwined with or adjacent to other subjectivities and identities, reemphasizing Tölölyan's claim that in diasporan localities, individuals experience choice between competing representations and affiliations, although they may experience choice as constrained in particular ways.

In this chapter, I aim to both broadly represent the Armenian American community of the Los Angeles area and highlight local complexity that points to diasporic "tension between centrality and fragmentation" that is especially sensed in a city like Los Angeles, known as sprawling, decentralized, and "pluralist" (Mekdjian 2008:45). I do not provide a comprehensive account of demographics or history of the diaspora because this would entail a dissertation of its own, but rather reference multiple diasporan connections in relation to immigration and diversity of the population in the Los Angeles region. As does Maud Mandel, in his study of Armenian survivors in France, I first discuss Armenian American institutions and organizations to illustrate how in their materiality and structure they have provided the basis for idealization of community cohesion and cultural continuity (Mandel 2003). I also discuss

key factors, including race and class, that participate in the reproduction of intra-Armenian diversity and hierarchy. Throughout, I aim to respond to Bakalian's conclusions, which largely drawn from a survey of Armenian Americans in the New York area in 1986 are meant to be "representative of Armenian Americans, […] encompass[ing] a wide spectrum of people" (Bakalian 1994:5). Over 20 years later, and 21 years after the Republic of Armenia declared independence from the Soviet Union, the Armenian American community in southern California is significantly changed from that which Bakalian describes. I view each local diasporan community as having its own unique origins and its own "pace and shape," influenced by relations with the host state, the degree and kind of global processes within the locality, and the particular institutions that influence the community by providing resources used in negotiating subjectivity (Tölölyan 2001:3). While a global phenomenon that creates a sense of belonging for its members, diaspora is conceived from particular locations, relationally, and takes distinct forms in each locale (Appadurai 2000, Aghanian 2007, Dufoix 2003). Though considered as diasporans to be displaced physically, Armenian American activists who participate in discourses of the nation are not culturally or politically displaced (Clifford 1994, Moran 2005).

Demographics and Immigration History

It is sometimes said in popular discourse that 1.5 million Armenian Americans live in the United States. Looking at U.S. census data, however, shows this number to be quite high. According to the 2010 American Community Survey, an estimated 325,822

persons in the United States could be identified as claiming a single Armenian ancestry (American Community Survey 2013). Including persons who could be identified by reporting Armenian ancestry as one of multiple ancestries, the estimate jumps to 474,559 (American Community Survey 2013). Of that number, an estimated 254,696, roughly 54 percent, lived in California where Armenians were in 2001 said to be 1.3 percent of the state population (American Community Survey 2013, Phinney, et. al. 2001). Narrowing further, an estimated 204,474 persons of Armenian ancestry lived in the Los Angeles metro area (American Community Survey 2013). I interpret this data to mean that approximately 43 percent of people claiming Armenian ancestry in the United States are estimated to have lived in southern California in 2010. This is the largest concentration of Armenian Americans by far, with New York, Boston, and Fresno following with approximately 25 to 30 thousand respectively (American Community Survey 2013). The numbers are higher in the Gale Multicultural Encyclopedia, ranging from 70 thousand to a hundred thousand for these cities and including Detroit (Takooshian 2003). It could be that American Community Survey numbers show an underrepresented Armenian community, and that estimates of over one million are more accurate. I note this discrepancy of enumeration as a reflection of the so-called "hidden" aspects of Armenian Americans. One researcher suggests that some Armenian American individuals may be reticent to report identity outside of standard racial categories (white, African American, etc.) because it marks them in a way, "providing a

head count for a government agency," that is remembered as leading to victimization (Sarian 2012:5).

The most significant influx of Armenian immigrants to the United States occurred between 1890 and 1924. Many immigrants during that period were displaced persons without a nationality and today viewed as escapees of violence and oppression, including genocide (Mandel 2003). Prior to the 1890s, it has been estimated that less than one hundred Armenians resided in the United States (Takooshian 2003). For this wave of immigration, it is difficult to approximate numbers of Armenian immigrants because the designation of Armenian was not always treated as a proper nationality by the Commission of Immigration (Malcom 1969, Mandel 2003, Yeretzian 1974). Often early Armenian immigrants were labeled Ottoman or Russian reflecting their place of origin, citizenship, or departure. By 1917, over two thousand Armenian immigrants had declared California their destination upon arrival in the United States, and by 1923, the city of Fresno in central California was considered the second largest գաղութ (kaghut/gaghut), colony or offshoot community, in the United States with approximately 18 thousand Armenians (Malcolm 1969, Yeretzian 1974, Kooshian 2002). During the same time period, small numbers of Armenians began settling in Los Angeles, roughly two thousand by 1914 and three thousand by 1923 (Malcolm 1969, Yeretzian 1974, Kooshian 2002). Most of these are said to have been students, theologians, and merchants who were "all scattered throughout the city … [and] do not keep themselves

in colonies" (Yeretzian 1974:41). They were emigrants of both Ottoman and Russian empires, diverse in Christian beliefs and language as in skills and labor (Kooshian 2002).

Harold Takooshian estimates that by 1924, approximately 95 thousand Armenians had arrived from the Ottoman Empire and Turkey. The Immigration Act of 1924, however, restricted immigration to two percent of the populations of each nationality represented in the U.S. Census of 1890. This could have severely capped Armenian immigration (Takooshian 2003). Contributing to the Armenian quota as an official demographic category was a 1922 decision by the League of Nations' High Commission for Refugees to recognize Armenians as a population of stateless refugees sharing a language and heritage (Mandel 2003). Also, contributing to the ability of Armenian immigrants to continue entering and settling in the United States was their exemption from the Immigration Act's prohibition of immigration by individuals who would be seen as ineligible for United States citizenship, that is, non-white persons of Asian ancestry. The Armenian classification then was simultaneously, for purposes of legal demographics and national U.S. belonging, one that referenced refugee status, heritage, and race. Not exactly expatriates, having no state to represent a homeland, Armenian Americans may have willingly participated in the construction of this national, political identity taking advantage of the benefits it provided, reuniting families and becoming socially mobile citizens, for example, while at the same time expressing uncertainty about perception as uprooted transnationals with no home to which to return (Malkki 1992, Mandel 2003). To become an Armenian American meant becoming

simultaneously vulnerable and privileged, but Armenian Americans perhaps did not vocalize their experiences of ambivalence until that privilege has been secured (Roediger 1994).

The Cartozian ruling of 1925, following the Halladjian decision of 1909, wrote Armenians into U.S. law as white and non-Asian (Markarian 2008, Tehranian 2009). While the earlier explicitly concerned the privilege of white immigrants to naturalize, the later allowed Armenians exemption from the Asian Exclusion Act. Drawing on a mixture of scientific evidence and commonplace assumptions, several factors contributed to the courts' decisions: literacy, Christianity, and intermarriage (Markarian 2008, Okoomian 2002, Tehranian 2009). With claims of being the first Christian nation, the court saw Armenians as different from the Orientalized religions of the so-called barred Asiatic zone, and took Armenian Christianity as an index of European relation (Tehranian 2009). With anti-miscegenation laws enacted in many states, the court noticed that local communities did not seem to discriminate against Armenian-white married couples and that Armenians generally tended to marry white (including ethically marked white), English-speaking individuals when marrying outside the Armenian community (Markarian 2008). This was viewed by the court as a proper process of assimilation into white America, verifying that Armenian American whiteness was interpreted as a "set of normative cultural practices" and not necessarily experienced as a uniform or "readily apparent" identity (Hartigan 1997:497, 500, also Okoomian 2002). That is, legal whiteness and the benefits that offered required the

performance of whiteness to be accepted in mainstream American society (Fordham 2008).

That a common notion prevailed of Armenians as a white minority from the Ottoman Empire also points to the impact of campaigns for the cause of the "starving Armenians" in the previous decade, where Armenians were portrayed in conflation with Europeans who were seen as their protectors against Muslim Turks construed negatively and racially as Oriental barbarians. Race was more than an ascription but was established as a key factor in shaping the experience and perceptibility of Armenian immigrants in this time (Gilroy 1990, Jacobson 2010). Inclusion into whiteness as a "disciplinary regime[,] configures bodies as they are assimilated, excluding some behaviors and signs while producing others" (Okoomian 2002:214). For Janice Okoomian, it is ironic that while skin color was not a key racial determinant for Armenians, whiteness was nevertheless established in the body as memories of Armenian suffering "had to be linked with, and even displaced by" that of European Christians and "their 'Oriental' differences had to be downplayed" to be put into contrast with "Asians" and "Muslims" (Okoomian 2002:220). In her view, this led Armenian Americans to "have been positioned or to have positioned themselves in a racial borderland" (Okoomian 2002:217).

After World War II, American attitudes about hierarchies of whiteness changed (Sacks 1994). Armenian Americans had fought in the war alongside other white Americans and experienced an equalizing effect. Second and third generation Armenian

Americans along with established communities across the United States had "come of age" as American (Papazian 2001). With mainstream Americans having forgotten decades-old stories now of Armenian refugees and in the midst of a post-war economic boom that saw a thickening middle class, Armenian Americans were positioned to participate in the available economic and social opportunities granted by their whiteness (Sacks 1994). Also, in the immediate postwar period, a small wave of Armenians came to the United States as displaced persons or liberated prisoners of war, but it is hard to know exactly how many (Takooshian 2003). Less than nine percent of Bakalian's survey group immigrated in the 1940s and just under 13 percent in the 1950s, but these numbers also reflect that this study reflects a population with origins in Turkey and the Middle East rather than southern and eastern Europe, countries including Greece and Bulgaria with significant Armenian populations (Bakalian 1994). Some of these Armenian immigrants were children of genocide survivors who had settled as refugees in countries nearer to Turkey or Armenia. Some were individuals who had survived genocide and World War I, then fought for a new state in World War II, only to be displaced once more. Immigrants also came from Egypt during this time period, and while Dennis Papazian claims that new immigrants revitalized ethnic and national feelings among assimilating Armenian Americans, he also states that "only grudgingly" were they accepted by "Americanized" Armenians for differences including language, class status, and racial perceptibility (Papazian 2001).

The next large wave of Armenian immigrants to California arrived from the late 1960s into the eighties, from the Middle East, mainly Iran and Lebanon where Armenians lived as descendants of both previous diasporans and genocide survivors. This wave reflects the revised U.S. immigration laws of 1965, which restructured the 1924 quota system and made it easier for skilled workers and family members of U.S. residents to immigrate. Armenian immigration to California from Beirut, Tehran, and Isfahan increased during this time. The Refugee Act of 1980 encouraged immigration and resettlement to people "escaping communism or repression in Middle Eastern countries," applying the United Nations' concept of "refugee" as a person who cannot return to his or her country of nationality because of fears of persecution in relation to religion, politics, racial and ethnic affiliation, or social group membership (Meissner 2010). Drawing on universal humanitarian discourse, this conceptualization of the refugee recognized displacement and loss to which the United States once again positioned itself as a "safe haven" (Feldman 2007:139, also Mandel 2003). It responded to a population deemed different than the ordinary citizen because of its particular social vulnerabilities (Masquelier 2006). Ironically, the label refugee reproduced some of those vulnerabilities when an influx was perceived to be a threat by citizens (Malkki 1992). The law also granted asylum to some Armenians who were already in the United States, relabeling them refugees and providing assistance for resettlement. In the 1980s, refugees who entered the United States under this Act came largely from Southeast Asia and the Soviet Union. A devastating earthquake in Leninakan (now Gyumri) in 1988 and

a military conflict with Azerbaijan from 1988 were significant push factors for Soviet Armenians. Increasingly, Armenian immigrants in this period settled in Los Angeles. This is one reason why Bakalian's survey group on the East Coast only includes three percent who immigrated after 1980 (Bakalian 1994). Takooshian claims that 75 percent of the 60 thousand Armenian immigrants who arrived to the United States in the 1980s settled in Los Angeles (Takooshian 2003:135). The Armenian American community on the East Coast has been, then, fairly recognized as comprised of older generations of immigrants and, if not more Americanized communities, stereotypically less diverse Armenian ones.

In Claudia Kouyoumjian's research conducted in California in 2008, 52 percent of participating high school students who identified as Armenian reported birth in the United States (Kouyoumjian 2008). Of the others, the dominant countries of birth were Iran, Iraq, and Greece. In a similar study she conducted among undergraduates at a university in California, 27 percent reported birth in the United States and foreign born reported births in Iran, Lebanon, Armenia, and Syria.[11] As George Sabagh and colleagues have pointed out, Armenian Americans often participate in other minority communities such as Syrian American and Persian or Iranian American communities, experiencing fluidity in overlapping and juxtaposed subjectivities (Sabagh et. al. 1990). It might be common for a person to self-identify for one reason or in one context as Lebanese and for and in others as Armenian then still in another as specifically Lebanese-Armenian-American. Individuals navigate these affiliations and identities in relation to their tracing of cultural heritage and "roots" through several different places and this can lead

to both cosmopolitan attitudes, as Ziemer claims, and nationalist ones (Malkki 1992, Ziemer 2009).[12] Language makes it easier to say some of this in Armenian. For example, the term Պարսկահայ (Barskahay) translates as Persian Armenian or Armenian from Iran. Countless times I have heard discussions about how Armenians from Armenia differ from those from Istanbul from those from Beirut and so on.

For the decades between 1990 and 2010, Los Angeles has been recognized as "one of the most ethnically diverse Armenian centers of the world" and the so-called capital of the Armenian diaspora (Sabagh 1990:3, also Pattie 1999). While Armenian Americans live and work throughout the Los Angeles area, today the city of Glendale is occasionally referenced as Armenian town and a center of Armenian American life in California. Glendale is located in the northeastern Los Angeles metro area, positioned between its neighboring cities of Burbank and Pasadena. This research project developed out of my living and working in this area and more than half of the research participants involved lived, worked, or were regularly engaged in activities in this sector of Los Angeles. The area officially designated Little Armenia is located in Hollywood and while it references a historical site, today it largely falls outside the spaces of daily routines, business, and activities of the majority of Armenian Americans in the region (Mekdjian 2008). In 2000, approximately 30 percent of the population of Glendale reported Armenian ancestry (American Community Survey 2013). Foreign-born persons accounted for 54 percent of that population, and almost 23 percent of those were born in Iran followed by Armenia with approximately sixteen percent (Mekdjian 2000).

According to *The Los Angeles Times*, Armenian immigration in 1987-88, in particular, represented the "largest ethnic influx [to Glendale] since the '70's" when "the boat people" had arrived from Southeast Asia (Schrader 1988). Because this group was composed of a majority of Armenians from Middle Eastern and Soviet areas, an Orientalist perception of Armenians emerged in tandem with U.S. patriotism opposed to Islam and Communism. This manifested in acts of racism and intolerance in Glendale, a city with a history of white supremacy. In the 1920s, Glendale was home to an active Ku Klux Klan group and in the sixties home to the West Coast Headquarters of the American Nazi Party (O'Neill 1987). In 1987, protests were held throughout the city in response to the establishment there of the headquarters of Pace Amendment Advocates, "which proposes deportation of all U.S. residents not of western European background" (O'Neill 1987). Glendale was accused at that time of "a racist image – in part because of official inaction" toward white supremacy (O'Neill 1987). So although at least two generations of Armenian Americans had experienced the effects of legal whiteness, that racial status became increasingly ambiguous in practice with the rising diversity of Armenian immigrants to Glendale. Those, for example, who spoke Arabic or were known to have served in the Soviet or Iraqi military forces, were sometimes treated as unable to become fully American and othered as non-white foreigners. To consider Armenians a racial group unto themselves is one thing and to consider them a nationality or ethnicity related to whites is another, but in either case, Armenian Americans have experienced discrimination, intolerance, and hatred on the basis of an Armenian identity. As recently

as 2010, this was a public concern when at least three Glendale police officers sued the city for discriminating against them on the basis of their Armenian identities (Rocha 2012). Nazareth Markarian reports seeing an insertion into a public news advertisement in 2004, “No Armenians allowed” (Markarian 2008:171). Personal and literary narratives reveal that Armenian Americans might generally feel secure in their whiteness but simultaneously feel poorly represented and even obscured by it (Tehranian 2009). Tensions and divisiveness within the Armenian American community have also been exacerbated in this context.

In the 21st century, Armenian Americans obtained a majority in the Glendale City Council and Glendale Community College teaches an array of courses in Armenian language and history. According to Krikorian Marketing Group, approximately one thousand Armenian owned and managed businesses operated in Glendale in 1999, with the majority of them situated in service, retail, and financial industries (Krikorian Marketing Group). Along with the size of the Armenian population, these are pull factors for immigrants that connote not discrimination but a climate of prosperity. The city has become a well-known symbol of both Armenian diversity and the American dream for southern Californians as well as for Armenians in Yerevan. Glendale affords economic opportunity, participation in a society where legally recognized refugees and displaced persons benefit from social services, and where intra-Armenian social hierarchies are simultaneously more flexible and reproduced. It has been common for me, when explaining my interest in Armenian American culture, to receive a response along the

lines of, “So are you in Glendale a lot?” One woman explained that when she had lived in Ventura County, she never heard Armenian language at the grocery stores. After moving to Glendale, in Los Angeles County, she heard a mother in a store teaching her daughters how to pick out the best watermelons in Armenian and she grew so excited that she almost walked up and introduced herself as a fellow Armenian. Then she remembered that it is expected to hear Armenian in Glendale. In Armenia, when I told a tour guide I was from Los Angeles, she exclaimed, “Aah! Glendale?!” (comment to author, 2009-2010). Soon after, I realized the depth of translocal processes when I found out over lunch that another woman on our tour was from Glendale and when later that week a group of volunteers from Glendale arrived at my hotel.

Institutions and Հայապապանում (Hayababanum, Armenian Preservation)

The Armenian Apostolic Church has been described as a means of “survival even in the most adverse conditions” over the last millennium, keeping alive Armenian knowledge, language, and tradition and providing a space and a structure for education, marriage, family and civic life (Panossian 2006:63, also Aghanian 2007, Pattie 1999).[13] In the Ottoman Empire, the church had been more than religious, operating as a political representative structure for the Armenian minority. Catholic and Protestant denominations have been claimed by smaller numbers of Armenian Americans, but in historical discourse, the Armenian Catholic monks of 18th century Italy, Mkhitarists, have been recognized as a group who spurred onward Armenian nationalism in a time of social and political fragmentation or stagnation (Panossian 2006). Suny writes of them

as “the first modern generation of Armenian patriots” who created an Armenian language dictionary and established schools in dispersed Armenian communities (Suny 1993:56). Suny and Panossian have also traced the role of the church in diasporan communities of Lebanon, showing that the church was able to unify diverse Armenian groups in the face of political threat (Panossian 2006, Suny 1993). As described below, the church and its affiliated structures in Beirut, Lebanon, became significant to the development of post-genocide diasporan nationalism, as Armenian survivors deported south from Anatolia eventually resettled there. Nationalism and the church have been close partners, but they are also intertwined institutionally with school, language, and politics, all together having “retained [their] symbolic centrality in Armenian national identity” (Panossian 2006:300, Bakalian 1994). One woman told me that a church, followed by a school, is the first thing Armenian immigrants would build, have built, as immigrants, speaking as if that were just the way it is.[14]

When I asked people what sites they would visit on a trip to Armenia, they always ranked churches highly, recognizing them as images of Armenian culture, architecturally as well as symbolically, as points of continuity linking diasporan placement to origins in a homeland. Most often when the topic of church came up in conversations about this research, people asked me if I attended Saint Mary’s, located near the Glendale Youth Center. I did not attend services, but I did spend multiple afternoons there, between a lecture and dinner or after an interview. Usually, I saw vans in the parking lot, flower delivery, catering, or repairmen. It was an active space

with couples taking photos on the stairway or teenage boys smoking outside the fence. While Saint Gregory's in Pasadena reminded me of Yerevan's modern, airy church named for the same, Saint Mary's reminded me of the ancient churches of Armenia that smelled of incense and roses. The first time I visited, I asked the man and woman in the front office if I should cover my head. She said, "You don't have to if you're uncomfortable with it (comment to author, 2009-2010). He said, "It would be better if you did" (comment to author, 2009-2010). So I always did. What I found fascinating about Saint Mary's was not the lack of pews, which were replaced by comfy, plush seats that folded up like in a movie theatre. It was that on many seatbacks were placards that gave names of people with their years of birth and death, a record of donations given in memory. I was startled the first time I sat down and saw the name of Gochinar Arakelian, 1900-1990, in front of me. This church literally stood as a monument, names of those who lived through genocide inscribed into the material structure of community life. As I sat, I watched tourists wander up and down the aisles, dispersed individuals in seats with their eyes closed or writing privately, and I looked back and forth from Ms. Arakelian's name plate to a painting of Saint Mesrob Mashtots, divinely inspired creator of the Armenian alphabet. I pondered the inseparability of the experience of the memorial, spirituality, and cultural institution.

Like me, few of the people who informed this research project were regular churchgoers although most were affiliated with specific churches for religious and cultural events. I learned that church activities are settings for embracing Armenian

American community values. When I had lunch with Angela in a shopping district of Pasadena, she did not hesitate in telling me that one of the main reasons parents enroll and encourage their kids to participate in church programs is to locate suitable marriage partners. Since she had been small, she remembered, her parents had been "conspiring and gossiping" with her friends' parents about being future in-laws (Interview, 2009-2010). "Have you dated anyone from church groups?" I asked. "No," replied Angela, "but now that I'm older, I realize I want to marry another Armenian, and so church is one good place to find someone" (Interview, 2009-2010). Her older brother had married an odar, and Angela saw that as cause of a variety of complications introduced into her family. For Nanor, church provided a community network, people she felt she could turn to for advice and who would understand her. These statements support Bakalian's claim that "communal life in the United States came to be organized around the churches" (Bakalian 1994:89).

I also quickly learned that what church one attends, or which church a person would attend if he were to go to church at all, matters. The specific alignment of the approximately 36 Armenian churches in the Los Angeles area references a person's Armenian positionality (Keshishian and Krieger 2003). That is, by knowing which church a person is affiliated with, a host of other information can be assumed, although not always accurately, about him. The church was historically divided from the 15th century between two holy sees, one in Etchmiadzin, Armenia, and the other in Cilicia, and then in Antelias, near Beirut, Lebanon (Panossian 2006). In the 1920s, the Catholicos of

Etchmiadzin, supreme head of the church, bowed to Soviet influence, unable to fight persecution of ethnic religion. After his death, the Soviet government was accused by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), a powerful, nationalist political party, of delaying and then manipulating the election of a new pro-Soviet Catholicos. The ARF was the leading political party during Armenia's independence from 1918-1920 and was banned in the Soviet Union (Panossian 2006). It was in this way a diasporan political engine, positioning itself as representative of the nation-in-exile (Tölölyan 2001). Taking root in the United States, France, and Lebanon, the ARF agenda has included a call for returned territories and Turkish compensation toward a free, independent Armenia. Historically, this has been interpreted as fighting for justice, but it was a fight situated from a diasporan positionality in which the ARF has been described as politically "sophisticated" to the degree of acting as a "government in exile" (Mandel 2003:124). The ARF accused the new Catholicos and church in Armenia of acquiescence and abandonment of the nation, and the ARF developed an affiliation with the other holy see in Antelias. Today, some Armenian Apostolic churches fall under direct jurisdiction of the Catholicos in Etchmiadzin and are called churches of the "diocese." Others are governed by the Catholicos of the House of Cilicia, and they are referred to as churches of the "prelacy." While no significant differences have been identified in church theology or practice, in the United States, political affiliation and intra-Armenian difference have been mapped onto the division of the church. Although the church relations are improved in the 21st century, the distinction nevertheless remains in its

ability to position a person politically. When a young person says, “No, I don’t attend Saint Mary’s. I go to Saint Peter’s,” he might be stating much more about his identity, style, and politics.

Through the U.S. church split, intra-Armenian differences were further politicized. The “iron curtain separated not only the diaspora from the ‘homeland,’ but also the two major camps within the diaspora itself,” (King and Melvin 1994:83). A variety of humanitarian, educational, and civic Armenian organizations in the United States became further politicized or divided based on the affiliations of the founders, current members, or explicit goals. Heather Gregg has traced this divide by comparing two Armenian American lobbies currently active in Washington, D. C. Affiliated with the ARF is the lobby group Armenian National Congress of America (ANCA) which developed out of the Wilsonian movement for the first independent Armenia in 1918. The Armenian Assembly of America (AAA) is the lobby group affiliated with the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), a humanitarian and civic organization not a political party, but political, for one, in that it was created in diaspora in 1906 by anti-ARF communities (Başer, Gregg 2002, Mirzoyan 2010). Each group has its own research center, the Zoryan Institute and Armenian National Institute, respectively. Each produces its own variety of media publications, fundraising activities, and, important for my purposes, youth programs.

Participants in the Armenian Youth Federation (AYF) are one of the main youth populations with whom I am concerned in this dissertation. When an Armenian

American acquaintance introduced me to a community organizer in Glendale as the girl writing a dissertation on Armenian youth, she said, “Oh, you must hang out with the AYF youth then?” (comment to author, 2009-2010) I said, “Well, yes,” because I encountered only two activists affiliated singularly with any other group. Our acquaintance interjected, however. He suggested some activists were also affiliated with other parties, but before I could respond, the organizer cut him off, saying, “No, basically it’s the AYF” (comment to author, 2009-2010). The AYF was founded in the United States in 1933 as a youth wing of the ARF. Its goal has been to explicitly preserve Armenian heritage and keep Armenian culture alive in diaspora, and the ARF is commonly described as nationalist and hardline (Bakalian 1994:256, Mirzoyan 2010).[15] One mid- to high-level ARF member stated that “our mission has not changed in 105 years,” and the goal of *Asbarez*, its newspaper, is to provide a voice to ANCA and to “target placement of news” in order to promote activism and nationalist strategy (conference comment, 2013). With a somewhat more grassroots approach than the Assembly and AGBU associated groups like the Young Professionals, the AYF Western Region website claims the AYF is the “largest and most active Armenian-American youth organization in the United States” (Armenian Youth Federation, Western Region 1933-2013a, also Gregg 2002).

A summer camp, internship program, college scholarships, and student campus groups are all ways that youth are brought into the ARF. A significant feeder group is the ARF juniors, aged approximately nine to fifteen. The ARF Badanegan chapters are

oriented to Armenian American youth with historical ties to Lebanon, and one young man described the AYF as the next step in commitment to the Armenian cause, in serving the Armenian American community. He named ANCA as the highest level in this hierarchical organization but said that to be involved in ANCA would require higher education and a political career. Approximately seven different AYF chapters operate in the Los Angeles region, making it the AYF Western Region's largest concentration of members (Armenian Youth Federation 2010-2011). Glendale and Pasadena chapters accounted for a combined 29 percent of these members in 2010 and 2011, with the smallest chapters located in Houston, Las Vegas, and Phoenix (Armenian Youth Federation 2010-2011). Over 50 percent of members in 2010-2011 were between 19 and 22 years of age (Armenian Youth Federation 2010-2011). The AYF annual report for 2010-2011 claims 397 members, however, the number of youth who participate in AYF events and activities without full (paid) membership is much higher (Armenian Youth Federation 2010-2011). Regular meetings, often weekly, emphasize political activism and education in language and history as key in maintaining Armenian identity. Meetings are opportunities for socializing, practicing Armenian language, and organizing fundraisers and events.

Odar friends of AYF members sometimes participate in events including commemoration services and protests, as public participants. The AYF seems to welcome support and desire recognition from outside the Armenian American community although it places serious limits on such participation, as I mention in

chapter 1. When one high school teacher, who does not identify as Armenian or claim Armenian heritage, asked a student if he could attend an ARF Badenegan meeting to learn more about it and his Armenian American students, the student chuckled, saying "No, no … nah" (comment to author, 2009-2010). The student did not state a reason for saying "no," but both men understood what was implied: only Armenians are welcome to attend. The teacher also expressed that when speaking to the student, who had been sharing regularly about his ARF activities with pride, he was received with an attitude of surprise or uncertainty, as if the student had never been asked questions about the ARF in such a way previously. Certainly the distinction between who is Armenian and who is not is reinforced and reproduced by these youth groups. Individuals who identify as "half-Armenian" or non-Armenian parents of Armenian American children for example, often expressed confusion and disappointment about the way they were perceived to belong or not belong to the Armenian American community in its institutionalization (Interviews, 2009-2010). For these individuals, "feeling" Armenian might not always be good enough, but at the same time, institutional membership could in some cases verify one's Armenian belonging (Bakalian 1993).

Two other organizations that are significant to this dissertation are the Armenian Student Association (ASA) and the Unified Young Armenians (UYA). Both state that they exist for all Armenians and the UYA calls itself an "independent youth movement" (Unified Young Armenians 2009).[16] Such expressions of inclusiveness both reproduce the discourse of Armenian political parties which attempt to speak on behalf of all

Armenians and respond to the political divide by claiming to be above it. This discourse upholds a "false notion of oneness" that pervades the diaspora in its ideological elements (Yacoubian 2013). The UYA might not be officially affiliated with a particular church, school, or political party, and it claims to offer free language and history classes, but it is present alongside the AYF in political protests and demonstrations. Sometimes, youth are unaware of or disillusioned by the high degree of institutionalization in the Armenian American community and experience distance from these organizations or participate in multiple groups according to their individual desires. Any student can attend ASA meetings and events on their college campuses. Size of groups ranges based on Armenian student population, number of commuters, and political affiliations of professors on campus. In 2009, one campus averaged 15 people per meeting, another 40. Although I believe the character of each ASA club is unique to its members and campuses, the All-ASA umbrella group is affiliated with the ARF, and ANCA representatives have often established relationships with ASA leaders. The students who talked with me about participation in the ASA said their goals were to spend time with or meet fellow Armenian Americans, to learn about Armenian culture, or to display Armenian affiliation. Yearly events in 2009-2010 included mixers, holiday celebrations, a retreat, and activist and community service works, and the President of one ASA told me he followed a strict calendar. He had high expectations for his members in that he asked them to refrain from foul language, immodest clothing, and laziness or indulgence. He saw himself as an important leader of a generation of Armenian Americans.

An important reason youth might attend church, summer camp teen session, or UYA meetings is to practice Armenian language skills, a traditional marker of Armenian membership (Panossian 2006, Phinney et. al. 2000). Srbuhi and I walked through a church once, when we were told to go and talk to each other by her colleague. She spoke German, French, and English, but as we meandered around the pews in polite conversation, she would greet those we passed in formal Armenian. “Barev dzez,” she said, again and again. Some, especially older men and women, greeted us both in Armenian. Some said nothing. This seemed to be one of those instances when presence indicated Armenian affiliation, which Srbuhi then conflated with language ability and preference. This experience reminded me of the findings of a 30 year old survey of approximately 1400 individuals in Glendale who self-identified as Armenian (Der-Karabetian, et. al. 1981). Researchers found that the ability to speak Armenian was the most important factor in defining Armenian identity, and the number one issue facing the Armenian community was reportedly loss of language (Der-Karabetian, et. al. 1981). However, when responses were segregated, the ability to speak Armenian fell to fourth place for people born in the United States, behind knowledge of Armenian history and having Armenian parents. In fact, the majority of the interviewees who participated in my research project spoke English as a first language.

While the majority of youth participants spoke some Armenian language, at least half were not fluent or able to read and write in Armenian, and they expressed doubt and difficulty with the language. On the one hand, this has kept some youth from fully

participating in community activities, church services, and so on. Some experienced discrimination from other Armenian Americans because they lack fluency or speak in jilted phrases (Pattie 1999). As one result, young people "least proficient in Armenian oral and literacy skills were primarily negative about those who spoke Armenian around them" (Imbens-Bailey 1997:17). In a 1997 study, parents were found to enroll children in Armenian-language organizations and activities because the language was "necessary for 'knowing our history[,]' for 'expanding our heritage,' and for 'advancing knowledge of the Armenian culture'" (Imbens-Bailey 1997:19-20). Higher degrees of oral proficiency and literacy in Armenian were found to correlate with greater affinity to the community and self-identification as Armenian (Imbens-Bailey 1997). On the other hand, lack of language ability can provide motivation to participate in groups like ASA where English is often the primary language used and Armenian language skills can be practiced.

Educational contexts and positions exacerbate these tensions. In most, if not all, public schools in southern California, Armenian speakers have been considered Armenian American persons, reinforcing the notion that language and identity go hand in hand. The state of California allows school districts and local governments to track racial and ethnic groups they individually determine are significant in their districts. Often, schools track Armenian speakers instead, labeling them a racial or ethnic group or statistical population. Doing so conflicts with national categories, used on the federal census for example, which when applied at school would classify Armenian students as

white. Even when writing in *Armenian* on school paperwork, one district automatically translates the term to *white*. This is certainly confusing to both Armenian American students and their peers. It is also a poor representation of students who identify as Armenian American, who have been known to segregate on the basis of language preference and ability as well as national, familial affiliations. I visited a group of students once, at a club activity, and found the room divided by an invisible line. On one side students spoke in English, on the other they spoke Eastern Armenian. Considering that the numbers of Armenian speakers reported does not correspond directly with a student population identifying as Armenian American, the numbers can still be valued in pointing to a significant Armenian population in several public Los Angeles high schools. For example, in 2006-07, Armenian was reported by the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) as the fourth most spoken language by students at home, behind English, Spanish, and Korean, respectively (Los Angeles Unified School District 2007). A lack of data exists to describe which of these students are fully bilingual (English-Armenian) and the relationships between bilingual and monolingual speakers.

Armenian language and history are offered as part of a core curriculum in at least four private Armenian schools in the Los Angeles area, in the largest grouping of Armenian full day schools in the United States in Bakalian's work (Bakalian 1994:269). In a paradigm influenced by the diasporan tradition in Lebanon, Panossian claims, the founding of Armenian schools was meant to mobilize "identity reformulation," so that "the community could interpret its difference from the host society," a goal that sounds

similar to that of the AYF (Panossian 2006:297). Some schools, like “Pilibos,” are explicitly affiliated with churches while others, like “Manoogian-Demirdjian,” are directly associated with particular diasporan institutions, in this case the AGBU. So it is often the case that a smaller group of Armenian American students obtains a particular kind of institutionalized knowledge which in some cases differentiates them from students at public schools and, considering tuition, is correlated with class differences. Panossian, Tölölyan, and Suny might identify private school students as nationalist elites in training. Such students often acted in my research experiences as representatives of the larger community, showcasing their knowledge, language ability, and commitment to the Armenian cause on the front lines of the struggle for justice. Bakalian suggests that graduates of these private schools and programs are no less Americanized than other Armenian Americans (Bakalian 1993). They rather have a greater ability to move between languages, organizations, and practices with fluency. In this way, they often become representatives, or front-line defenders, of Armenian American interests to mainstream American society. Explained by a scholar of the Greek diaspora in the United States, Armenian American discourse similarly sets up “an assimilated ethnic elite reconfigure[d] and imagine[d] […] as a vanguard” (Anagnostou 2003:280). When I attended a protest that was held on a weekday, I discovered that the majority of students present had been encouraged to miss school, private Armenian schools, for the event. This situation could suggest that private school students were more knowledgeable about the political situation and encouraged to involve themselves more

in politics. On the other hand, it could point to the inability of public school students to miss school without reaping negative consequences, despite their desire to participate. It is important to note that in recent years, a sector of the diasporan population in southern California has begun to look down upon nationalist-toned groups and schools. Some expressed to me that a competing elite group finds "gentility and diplomacy" and accommodation a preferred Armenian American attitude (Interview, 2009-2010).

Intra-Armenian Difference and Stereotypes

"The only real Armenian fast food restaurant," in Arpine's words, is a chain of several restaurants in southern California managed by a feuding family of Armenian Americans with roots in Lebanon (Interview, 2009-2010). The one where we ate together was located in a strip mall, as most are, and the customers flooded the little dining area into the parking lot and the patio area of an Armenian American bakery. We had walked the few blocks from the apartment Arpi shared with her mother and grandmother, passing old ladies in black dresses and thick shoes, young ladies with tight jeans and bold eye makeup, and teenage boys on phones grouped around parked cars.

Although her grandmother was mostly confined to a wheelchair, Arpi's family lived on the second floor of their building which had no working elevator. We had stopped in after Arpi got off work to say hello and so Arpi could change clothes. While she had looked for her leather jacket with zippers and tassels, I watched television with her elderly grandmother. She waved her extended arm at me indicating that I should eat something from the bowls on the dining room table. I saw nuts, chocolates, dried fruits,

and I took a piece of each. Then she waved her arm and nodded her head toward the living room sofa, so I maneuvered past the folded clothes in a pile and the ironing board shoved against the kitchen wall to join her. When she had a coughing spell, Arpi emerged to check on her and announced she was ready to go.

We had planned to eat dinner together to talk about something that had come up at Arpi's job. She was a part-time afterschool daycare worker at an elementary school. She arrived in the afternoon each day to play with rambunctious third- through fifth-graders until their parents picked them up a few hours later on the way home from law offices, hospitals, studios, and a variety of important meetings. The students loved Arpi because she was genuine, creative, and fair, but their parents regarded her with some distance, especially the Armenian American parents. Some might have been wary of Arpi's appearance in this religious school where female students were required to wear skirts or dresses and males wore blue pants and button-up shirts as uniforms, and where more than a few students came to school with designer bags, jewelry, or toys. Arpi had chopped, spiked purple hair and some of her clothes came from thrift stores. I knew her to be concerned with clipping coupons and paying for tuition at a local community college. She wore comfortable walking shoes as she rode the bus rather than fashionable dress shoes, but Arpi did not think it was all about her appearance. Arpi described her relationship with the parents as detached or even estranged, and recently she had found out that another daycare worker had been favorited by a group

of parents as a babysitter. This allowed the worker to earn extra income on evenings and weekends and Arpi was frustrated that she did not have this opportunity.

As we ate our chicken, she turned her disappointment into a discussion of "Armenians with money" (Interview 2009-2010). While Arpi was talking about her real experiences she referenced both stereotypes and, unknowingly, academic research. The stereotype of Armenian American wealth can be identified in media representations in popular television shows as well as in coverage of Armenian American politicians and lobbyists who lunch with celebrities and senators. These representations often obscure the experiences of those who struggle with hunger or unemployment and make it easy to disregard those who are in need of social services and other support. According to Ara Arzumanian, "When you drive through Glendale, [...] you won't see with your naked eye evidence of all the social ills plaguing the place. You need to dig in" (Arzumanian 2010). As Mekdjian's research shows, not all Armenian Americans are well-off. In 2000, over 41 percent of individuals in Glendale living below the poverty line reported Armenian ancestry (Mekdjian 2000). Median household income and per capita income were, in 1999, less for Armenian Americans than for the population of Glendale, 67 percent and 63 percent, respectively (Mekdjian 2000).

Drawing on the ideas of Tölölyan, Mekdjian claims that diasporic consciousness is controlled and produced by an elite which is largely rooted in Middle Eastern habits, memories, and experiences, and which understands the diaspora as a direct effect of genocide (Giorgi 2012, Mekdjian 2008, Tölölyan 2001). That is, the influence of

institutions including those associated with the ARF, AGBU, and other diasporan positions has led to a leadership structure rooted in a particular kind of Armenian subjectivity and identity that is elevated over others. Specifically, immigrants from Armenia are not necessarily considered fully "diasporan" in this framework, which is why Mekdjian refers to diasporan membership as ideological (Giorgi 2012, Mekdjian 2008). In Arpi's case, it was true that she did not participate regularly in any Armenian American organization and did not care for diasporan politics. For Mekdjian, geographical segregation in Los Angeles is a direct representation and reinforcement of this Armenian American fragmentation (Mekdjian 2008). She shows that immigrants from Armenia and Russia are more likely to live modestly in urban areas like Arpi rather than in terraced or gated homes like many of the fifth graders. This could be due to the immigration history in which Armenians from the Middle East arrived earlier to Glendale than the majority of those from Armenia, giving them more time to establish wealth or careers. Arpi also validated Mekdjian's claim when she said felt looked down upon, not only because the parents were wealthy, but also because they were "from" Beirut and had been in California longer than she had. "How do you know that?" I asked. "I can tell by the way they talk, I mean their accents and the words they use," said Arpi, "I can just tell" (Interview 2009-2010). Sometimes language differences play a role in this fragmentation with those who speak French, Arabic, or Farsi frequently distinguished in style or class from those who speak Russian and Eastern Armenian, such as Arpi. Differences between Western and Eastern Armenian languages also signifies one's

diasporan positionality in that Eastern Armenian is spoken in Armenia while Western Armenian tends to be spoken by descendants of those from the Ottoman Empire, making it more traditionally or purely diasporan to some. Yet some youth I spoke with were confused about these differences, experiencing a particular blend of Armenian American street language.

In that they took up responsibility for hayababanum, institutions and organizations like the AYF, AGBU, and others have historically viewed themselves as Armenia's lifeline. Despite the placement of the Armenian Genocide Martyrs Monument, demarcated by a city sign on a major freeway in Los Angeles, which has served as a key memorial site, near a historic community of Armenian Americans from Russia, the idea that a particularly conceived diasporan existence excludes some Armenian experiences persists (Mekdjian 2008). Although it was in Yerevan, in the Soviet Union, that Armenians marched through the streets in 1965 demanding the right to publicly commemorate genocide, the idea that memory of the genocide has been kept alive by descendants of those who lived through it (conceived as Ottoman Armenians) has pervaded intra-Armenian division. That is, diasporan Armenian Americans have sometimes been critical of Armenians in or from Armenia for a lack of concern with hayababanum or with remembering genocide. Rubina Peroomian, for example, states that memory of "the Genocide of 1915 was abruptly switched off with the Sovietization of Armenia" (Hovanissian 2007:97). She represents herself through this statement as part of an institutionalized elite in diaspora that preserves memory.

Panossian writes that consciousness of genocide reached Russian and Soviet Armenians second-hand or more indirectly, pointing out that the Armenian communities of the "East" did not directly experience Ottoman oppression (Panossian 2006). While these are potentially contentious claims, when I asked Arpi to talk about what it "means to be Armenian," her usually unreadable, stoic face became expressive and animated, but she did not mention genocide. She told me stories of living in Yerevan, what the city was like, of historic sites in Armenia like Garni, and of famous Armenians like Sergei Parajanov. Perhaps she assumed I already knew about it or perhaps it was not the primary descriptive she wished to call upon.

In the process of elevating and reinforcing this ideological diaspora, negative stereotyping within the Armenian American community draws on an image of Armenians from Armenia and post-Soviet spaces as corrupt, greedy, and vulgar. In interviews, four young women described and used the stereotype with these phrases: "drive Mercedes they can't afford," "rude and crass demeanor," "illegal business dealings," and "acting ghetto" (Interviews, 2009-2010). All these women told me that they fight against this stereotype but that it may be "kind of true because they come from people's experiences in Armenia. That's what everyone does there just for survival" (Interview, 2009-2010). Here, survivorship in diaspora is contrasted with practical efforts to survive physically and economically in Armenia. It is as if some would say survivorship is sacrificed for survival in Armenia. Young diasporans with roots in the Middle East, Turkey, and Latin America often described Armenia as impoverished,

underdeveloped, and mismanaged. Although most had never been to Armenia, they had certain negative ideas about "the sad state of things there" (Interview, 2009-2010). Fundraising efforts, political protests over elections, and volunteer trips to Armenia are regularly located in youth discourses of Armenia in this way. Media representations often draw on this stereotype as well, propagating it in wider spaces. For example, in the television show *Weeds*, Armenian American characters are drug-selling, violent gangsters, and in *American Horror Story*, Joe Eskandarian is portrayed as unscrupulous, exploitative, and chauvinistic (Kohan 2006, Murphy 2011).

For Alicia, negative stereotypes and the figure of the mafioso were all she thought of when her parents told her at the age of sixteen that they would be moving from Buenos Aires to Glendale. She had images in her mind of young Armenian American men threatening old ladies on each street corner. Her Armenian Argentinean friends warned her to be careful, even though she laughed about that as she looked back in our conversation. Like Arpi, Alicia divided Armenian Americans into groups, specifically "three kinds of Armenians" as she saw it (Interview, 2009-2010). Her classification system was also offered to me independently by two other young women, indicating that this idea is shared, although some youth repeatedly and defensively deny this categorization saying that there are multiple, diverse ways to "be" Armenian. First, she described, are those who are fluent in Armenian, can read and write in Armenian, are familiar with Armenian history and politics, and generally try to attain a worthwhile career or life purpose to better oneself and serve humanity. I find her description to

loosely coincide with what to Suny is a "mode of adaptation" to diaspora in which dominant or host culture is not accepted as primary in one's identification (Suny 1993:216). He writes, that "they feel their Armenianness as either something natural and unchosen or as an obligation not to be questioned" (Suny 1993:216). I believe she included herself in this category, sharing with me her participation with an Armenian American sorority and her dream of being a doctor and working as a volunteer medical worker.

In the second group, she said, are Armenian Americans who have lost touch with their Armenian heritage. They do not speak, read, or write in Armenian, lack knowledge of Armenian culture and politics, and are passive or unmotivated in life. What she described sounded a bit like Bakalian's symbolic Armenian, or perhaps what Donald and Lorna Touryan Miller have referenced as "shish kebab Armenians" (Bakalian 1994, Miller and Miller 1991:30). These are people accused of displaying ethnic markers through easy symbols. Alicia suggested they might be "confused" about their identities (Interview, 2009-2010). These descriptions also correspond to another of Suny's modes of adaptation, one that he claims is the polar opposite of the first. He writes of it as a way of "having thrown off their ties to ethnic culture and acculturated or even assimilated" (Suny 1993:216).

The third group she labeled *rabiz*, which I learned about from Arpi. We had crumpled up the trash of wrappers and napkins on our orange trays when she nodded and flicked her eyes toward a group of teenage boys dressed all in black, sunglasses, and

gold jewelry. She said, “They are so rabiz” (Interview, 2009-2010). Having no clue what she was talking about, I repeated, “Rabiz?” She told me “rabiz is like it sounds, ‘rubbish’. “Those Armenians are like rubbish” (Interview, 2009-2010). I eventually learned how this classification could refer to stereotypes about Armenians, especially men, ranging from negative ideas of “fresh off the boat” to “womanizer,” “urban,” or “low-class.” According to an online post, the generally derogatory term “subjectively applies to any young man who does not conform to the social and cultural expectations of the observer” (Garbis 2007). It is often associated with a particular music style, forms of dress, slang words, and/or an assumed attitude of false or poor Armenian cultural understanding (Abrahamian 2005). Rabiz music for example is said to blend both Russian and Turkish elements in a uniquely modern mix and this, to some Armenian Americans, is not a good representation of or means of preserving “purely” Armenian music. It is thinned out or distorted somehow in this conceptualization. Alicia referred in this way to rabiz as a “vulgar” understanding of what it means to be Armenian (Interview, 2009-2010). Rabiz carries connotations of class, as a “booming” “lifestyle” of the “social class” of “hillbilly” or “redneck” Armenians (Urban Dictionary 1999-2013, Osipova 2011). Even though Arpi admitted that she had herself been called rabiz by a former boyfriend and did not like it, she used the term to distinguish herself from others as a more proper Armenian. Another person acknowledged rabiz as a category but dismissed it completely at the same time by saying, “Rabiz is not to be considered Armenian of any kind, my dear” (Interview, 2009-2010).

Some people in the diaspora believe that rabiz culture is heavily influenced by Russian style and attitude, particularly when it comes to "big business" (Garbis 2007). Underlying stereotypes of illegality and living beyond one's means might be a lingering assumption that rabiz culture feeds into and on post-Soviet mafia culture. Yet Christian Garbis writes that "rabiz applies to those trying to conform to the local popular culture fostered by inner-city African-American youth" in Los Angeles (Garbis 2007, comment to author 2009-2010). The relationship between African American and Armenian American youth is an interesting area for future study. It is possible that some Armenian American youth identify with a history of ambivalence to memory of woundedness or fight against white classification. In the rabiz classification are two strands of influence that reveal a bit of translocal complexity. In any case, the influence of Russian and American urban forms are treated as an offense to the institutionalized effort of hayababanum.

Conclusion

William Saroyan's quote, at the beginning of this chapter, speaks of an almost inevitable resilience and survival that for Viken Yacoubian manifest externally in strong institutions and internally in a "psychological shielding" (Yacoubian 2009). Similar to Panossian, Yacoubian claims a mentality of continued victimization, oppression as a minority, or racial and ethnic discrimination led to a collective desire for insularity as protection (Panossian 2006). He claims Saroyan's writing eloquently reflects the "drive to survive" specifically these threats (Yacoubian 2009). Youth activists and others often recited to me Saroyan quotes of this nature and spoke of this urge toward institutional

and psychological protection as, essentially, a part of "the Armenian psyche" (comment to author, 2009-2010).

Far from embracing this insularity, Saroyan's work also portrays complex relationships with other Americans and U.S. minorities and he could also be interpreted as struggling with, questioning, and contemplating the place of Armenian Americans in the United States. Speaking from his perspective, Denise Aghanian claims that "confused feelings of acceptance" and "idiosyncratic," "emotional dichotom[ies]" best describe the diasporan Armenian experience (Aghanian 2007:102). Economic success and racialized treatment as white, for some, have not necessarily led to a collective "sense of contentment and happiness" (Aghanian 2007:102). Rather, the "pervasive feeling of political impotence," the collective sense of "loss and moral outrage," and the "threat" of "loss of identity" have complicated negotiations of identity and survivorship (Aghanian 2007:103). Mandel's research also demonstrates that a desire for Armenians to integrate or assimilate into mainstream society as citizens was put into balance with the realization that, as Armenian survivors, there existed a "safe place to be Armenian" (Mandel 2003:150, also Appadurai 1996). Although having come to the United States largely from empires in which Armenians had been persecuted for "their ethnoreligious distinctiveness," Armenian Americans, like their counterparts in France, have been "commit[ed] to maintaining visible communities" (Mandel 2003:152).

Saroyan responds to this experience through a metaphysical approach. As I understand him to say at the end of *My Name is Aram*, survival as salvation comes

through an open willingness to believe anything, accepting even contradictory, multivalent, or competing modes of existence at once (Saroyan 2010). The most important thing is to believe in humanity, in one's own and in everyone else's. He encourages a person to look for what is good in all that is around him, for that is what it means to survive.

Chapter 4 | Claiming Survivorship

Youth Commemoration

In a dingy parking lot between a gas station, genocide memorial marker, church, and civic auditorium, and across from the community college – near the intersection that one woman called the "most Armenian place in Los Angeles," we stood with candles for the Unified Young Armenians' (UYA) genocide commemoration service (Interview, 2009-2010). A large banner hung as a backdrop for an elevated stage that faced the crowd and the busy street behind us. It depicted in black-and-white an elderly woman, recognizable as a survivor of genocide, with words in red superimposed upon her, "Survivor: (ser-vahy-vor): a person who continues to prosper in spite of opposition, hardship, or setbacks" (Unified Young Armenians 2010). This definition defines the survivor as "a person with agency" to resist, a person who "defies submission" (Avakian 2006:51). It prompted me to think about a superimposition, or layering, of survivorships.

The UYA definition is quite distinct from that of survival: "encounter[ing,] be[ing] exposed to, or witness[ing] death, and […] remain[ing] alive" (Alayarian 2008:115, also Levi 2008). Survivorship is distinct from survival which I loosely interpret as a physical experience of life or a mode of living that is a struggle to an essentially reduced degree. Survivorship is a subject position from and in which persons know themselves in relation to others as survivors in a variety of ways not limited to the physical. For example, Primo Levi makes this distinction in showing that physical survival often involves the death of one's humanity. He writes that to kill the spirit is something different from physical

death, distinguishing the experience of bare physical survival, in which the past and present are obliterated, from survivorship which is of the spirit or mind (Levi 2008). Also, for Donald Miller, survivorship means living with the memory of death or loss after or based on an experience of survival (Miller and Miller 1993:3).

In this commemoration service, first, genocide survivors who lived through events of 1915 were to be honored. They were remembered for survival, their "living conditions and resistance strategies" in a context of attempted murder, displacement, and oppression (Fassin 2007:261). They were also remembered for their survivorship, which Didier Fassin describes as the practice of "living after a critical event" that relies on resilience and a passionate embrace of life over death (Fassin 2007:261-262). Second, Armenian Americans of younger generations were to think of themselves as survivors born into a diasporan community which resulted from the resettlement of the primary genocide survivors. In this way, younger generations claimed to be genocide survivors of a different degree, that is, as cultural remainders who in their existence evidenced their ancestors' survival. In both of types of survivorship, to be a survivor is to be "severed from the collectivity of the dead" or lost – to be seen as a remnant or as that which still exists (Yoneyama 1999:103). This is the concept of one Armenian language translation of the English term *survivor*. Կենդանի մնաց անձ (Gendani mnats andz) can be understood as "the one who remains living" or "the one who has as a remainder persisted in living." But also, third, survivors were those who carry forward a "struggle for justice" in the face of ambiguity or opposition to recognition of the first

two types of survivorship. In this perspective, Armenian Americans "continue to prosper" as culturally and distinctly Armenian in the diasporan context of Los Angeles.

It was a public school district's annual commemoration service where youth were explicitly recognized as survivors in relation to photographs of the elderly "last living survivors" of genocide (commemorative speech, 2009-2010). After two hours' worth of patriotic Armenian and American performances, including poetry recitation, student films, Armenian dancing, and choral singing, the closing speaker took the podium. He flashed slides of the photographs, beautifully shot and elegantly textured portraits of elderly survivors. He said, "I wonder if there are any survivors left today … Are there any survivors with us tonight?" (commemorative speech, 2009-2010). The year before, Mr. Babaian had been in the audience. At approximately one hundred years of age, he had slowly stood in the first or second row to several minutes of applause and tears. However, this next year, no survivor grabbed his cane or relative's arm to stand. Instead, from the back of the dark auditorium, I heard a young person call out, "Wait! I'm a survivor!" (commemoration service, 2009-2010). Then from a further corner, another yelled, "Me too!" (commemoration service, 2009-2010). Young people began popping up all over and shouting that, yes, they were the living survivors of genocide. They rushed the stage and were welcomed by the speaker around whom they lined up, modeling their survivorship.

Before we set down our candles in front of the tiny, concrete memorial in an overgrown corner of the parking lot, I watched R-Mean climb the steps of the stage and

perform what is quite possibly the song that made him famous as an Armenian American hip hop artist. He wore a puffy jacket and sunglasses at night, and he affected the manners of an MTV king. Soseh, a female vocal artist, accompanied and complicated R-Mean's punctuated, pounding words with more classical, lamenting cries. Called *Open Wounds*, the song describes how Armenians are victims of "viciousness" and "time" (R-Mean). R-Mean says he hates "them" for "scarring" him, though who exactly "they" are is never verbalized (R-Mean). After Soseh's interlude, "our wounds are dripping with bloody hell" (R-Mean). He sang,

> "Souls can't peacefully rest
> Till the killer's secret's confessed
> Buried in our holy lands that we now don't even possess
> It's taken
> Pardon my phrases, I'm blatant
> But all these nations are shaking the arms of Satan for the sake of army bases
> We're praying to God to make 'em admit it – we're still hoping
> But they still won't and that's why these wounds are still open" [R-Mean].

It might seem odd at first that R-Mean would sing this song about woundedness in front of a banner defining survivorship. However, what appear to be opposing messages are actually mutually reinforcing concepts that dominate Armenian American discourse.

Figure 4.1 R-Mean performs *Open Wounds* in front of a banner which defines "Survivor." Glendale, California. 2010. Photo by author.

It is not uncommon for survivor activisms and public expressions to point to victimization, suffering, and woundedness (Fassin 2008). It is through perception of the wound that survivorship is recognized. Though everyone and everything can be considered survivors of something, the specificity of the wound is important per that of the survivorship. To claim status of genocide survivors, perceptibility of the wound is solicited as originating in genocide. While the wound references a past threat of destruction or injury, survivorship is the continuation of prosperity in spite of, alongside, in the face of continuing threat or suffering, and the wound may be at times conceived as a cost of survival and survivorship. In this chapter, I show how Armenian Americans of younger generations "assume the wounds the[ir ancestors] suffered and articulate their identity in terms of those wounds" in order to claim contemporary survivorship (Crapanzano 2011:18).[17] To assume the wound is to reproduce it through one's own agency (an experience made possible through survivorship), but Vincent Crapanzano writes that younger generations are "at once responsible and not responsible for that wound" (Crapanzano 2011:18, also Kalayjian and Weisberg 2002).

In one study, Armenian American individuals reported feeling burdened by the emotional weight of their ancestor's memories, and they described the obligations to those memories as restrictions upon their freedom (Kalayjian and Weisberg 2002:298). While some young people reject this burden and distance themselves from Armenian American identification, others are motivated to over-invest in Armenian communities, "attempt[ing] to sublimate their negative feelings into positive actions as reflected in

their" careers, public identities, and expressions (Kalayjian and Weisberg 2002:299). This includes "studying Armenian Literature, making Armenian movies," and participating in "volunteering [and] lobbying" (Kalayjian and Weisberg 2002:299). I claim that one way younger generations acquire woundedness and survivorship is through institutionalized and paradigmatic responses to denial and lack of recognition. They are not responsible for the woundedness that collectively exists apart from them, but their participation in this paradigm reproduces it in their own subjectivities and is a means of scaffolding the personal to the political. While their participation was experienced to some degree as an "emotional burden," "accounts of the permanence of an emotional wound" were conceived as the proper form of "descendant commemoration" (Kidron 2012:731).

When young people participate in traditional or institutionalized forms of remembrance and activism, they often experience, through the "infrastructure" of memory, a "conditioning" and a practiced "consumption" of past, collective wounds through which they come to identify the marked specificity of the Armenian subject and "understand themselves as part of a community shaped by" genocide (Irwin-Zarecka 1994:13,90,127, comments to school audience, 2009-2010, also Kasbarian 2009). At this explicitly commemorative ceremony, participants were "reminded of [their] identity" through habituated, annual practices of memory (Connerton 1989:70). They adopted a particular gaze toward the past and toward themselves in relation to that past. In one perspective, memory is not here "fully embodied" but rather "bounces to and fro, gaining meaning" through individuals, images, and discourses (Zelizer 1998:4). The

paradigm that I discuss in this chapter is one that draws on a "perceptual apparatus of realism" exercised as a form of power to restrict other views of the past and therefore to regulate, modify, or banish other types of survivorship (Butler 2004, Feldman 1994:407, Trouillot 1995). In the political realm, realism has been privileged as authoritative, so its function is frequently to legitimize activist claims (Zelizer 1998). Within this orientation of the Armenian argument, visual realism is treated as the most accurate and official form of perception, allowing for the "mass produc[tion] of facts" to be taken for "ownership of history itself" (Feldman 1994:414). Marianne Hirsch explains that

> "When we look at photographic images from a lost past world, especially one that has been annihilated by force, we look not only for information or confirmation, but also for an intimate material and affective connection. We look to be touched, wounded, and photographs thus become screens—spaces of projection and approximation and protection" [Hirsch 2008:116].

In this view, memory is often located in surviving images of the past, which should be protected and not forgotten. As Henri Bergson reminds, though, the memories that survive do so because they are recognized in the present as offering potential for action (Bergson 2012[1911], Halbwachs 1992). To take the past as that which acts no longer is naïve because memory and perception are always intertwined, oriented to produce action (Bergson 2012[1911], Connerton 1989, Halbwachs 1992, Yoneyama 1999). When a person recognizes herself as a survivor, she allows a present field of action to offer perceptions which call upon her to produce and use knowledge of past woundedness. For Bergson, personal recognition is the grasping of the past to do

something now, and to study how youth recognize themselves as survivors is to study subjectivity and agency in practices of memory and perception (Appadurai 1996, Bergson 2012[1911], Massumi 2002). I constructed this chapter around images of first, land and spatialized sites of memory, and second, bodies, which are both centrally placed in discourse and image of survivorship and offer potential becomings.

Tsitsernakaberd, as discussed at the end of the previous chapter, represents both woundedness and loss as well as survival and remainder. When the memorial's image is used by youth, they display both remembrance and identification, situating themselves subjectively in relation to that image. At the commemoration service described above, I saw a popular t-shirt displaying Tsitsernakaberd and reading, "95 Years Later, I am a Survivor." I had seen the same shirts two nights before, where they were for sale at the price of twenty dollars. It was another commemoration service where the shirts almost looked like uniforms except the girls altered theirs toward some individual aesthetics: a huge gold belt cinched around the waist to make it look like a small dress, tied in a knot over the left hip, ripped at the neckline and sleeves. Both image and text reinforced the mutuality of the wound and survivorship. The image also complicated the conceived diaspora-Armenia relationship in claiming identification with both aspects of Tsitsernakaberd. That is, in one interpretation, the surviving spire of the memorial represents Armenia while the diaspora has been cut off or is a broken remnant. Here, it was diasporans who survived in contrast with the land where their ancestors had suffered, died, and been displaced.

Photographs of Tsitsernakabard were also the subject of two entries in the student art contest held in conjunction with UYA's commemoration service. A trend was to use realistic, historic images with which the audience would be familiar in a digitized or retouched paradigmatic commentary. In the adjacent parking lot, easels were set up displaying art representative of Armenian American remembrance. The first was a red-and-white polka dotted piece that looked like an advertisement or brand in development. Only when standing a foot in front of the image did I see coin-sized, shadowy Tsitsernakaberds inside the red dots. This image brought to mind the widely used map of the Armenian genocide with red dots all over Anatolia representing death and deportation, described in chapter 2. As I walked through, filling out my comments on a form that would count as my vote for a winner, I was curious about one image in which a woman's eyes took up almost the whole frame. Heavy eye makeup and perfectly straight, perfectly black hair contrasted with light eyes and almost translucent skin. As I got closer, I saw Tsitsernakaberd in one of her eyes. In the other was a famous photograph of a victim of genocide, a woman lying emaciated on the ground with an infant. If reflected in the irises, I could interpret the woman's eyes to be focusing her sight on remembrance. Yet because the artwork only displays her eyes and nothing else, I could also interpret her not be looking at anything except out at me, the viewer, as she allows her eyes to act as windows to her soul where woundedness and survivorship are found. Still another interpretation could take Tsitsernakaberd to be analogous to a

contact lens, a tool for perceiving the world as Armenian American, seeing in through photographic realism a historic truth.

From the UYA banner to these artistic productions, women seemed to predominate images of remembrance, of woundedness in survivorship. This suggests that memory of the Armenian genocide is gendered, as is increasingly noted by students and scholars alike (Derderian 2005, Giorgi 2012, Tachjian 2009). As is common in the tellings of other genocidal processes, experiences of violence have been expressed as gendered during the Armenian genocide. Women were vulnerable to sexual predation and abuse, and despite the fact that narratives, oral histories, and memories of genocide are commonly constructed from the point of view of a woman or orphan child, the two main categories considered to refer to the majority of surviving deportees, the details of narrated experiences and memories of rape, forced incest, mutilation, etc., are often omitted from scholarly and dominant histories of genocide while stereotyped and exaggerated in casual discourse and media representations (Hovannisian 1998, Miller and Miller 1993). This could be due to the tendency for sexually explicit stories to be omitted from the primary source documents used by scholars because of the impropriety of writing such by politicians and missionaries in 1915; the tendency to hypersexualize memory and violence today; the shame associated with memories of forced prostitution and other sexual violence; and the domination of the field of Armenian genocide studies by a masculine perspective (Alayarian 2008, Giorgi 2012).

Women have rarely, if at all, been represented by contemporary youth activists as primarily resistors or fighters. However, in the archives of Columbia University, I found the photograph of such a woman labeled "հայ հերոսուհի" (hay herosuhi, Armenian heroine) (Der Mahdesian 1895-1929). She sits alone, the only figure in the photograph, wearing pants, possibly a uniform, a rare image where an Armenian woman a century ago is not in a skirt. Strapped across her chest is a bandolier. She holds a rifle across her bent knee. This photo was located in a box of items listed as belonging to Arshag Der Mahdesian, an Armenian American writer, so I believe more diverse images of women may have been circulated in the past, as the recent work of Carina Karapetian Giorgi suggests (Giorgi 2012). I was prompted to consider that the heavily feminized representation of women as wounded survivors or corpses in contemporary discourse sets up a structure in which men are successful child survivors grown up, motherhood is a national end of sexuality which is sacralized, and means of resistance is masculinized (Giorgi 2012).[18]

One entry in the art contest did explicitly display woundedness and survivorship, both remembrance and resistance, in a feminine body. Perhaps it is different because the body is a contemporary one, primarily represented as a youth survivor. A young woman poses with tape across her mouth on which is written 1915, the year associated with genocide. I do not take her silence as a passive absence of voice, but I understand silence to be in this case an act that signifies absence "in order to become present" (Kidron 2012:730). Perhaps she has silenced herself because "she has something to

hide," as if what she has to say is not allowed to be or should not be spoken (Taylor 2003:204, Hackett and Rolston 2009). For Crapanzano, this kind of silence can exemplify an experience of younger survivors' woundedness (Crapanzano 2011:186). Maybe she is imitating the genocide survivor on the banner, representing the inability to speak a response to genocide and woundedness, yet survivorship is sometimes associated with having the right to speak and point to the past, so this image could be understood as one of wounded survivorship, in which her survivorship is itself wounded (Sturken 1998). In the use of duct tape across a feminine mouth, I have wondered about inferring a violent and even sexualized silencing (Kalayjian and Weisgberg 2002:299). Does she insinuate that those who wound her survivorship are masculine, powerful aggressors who have attempted to dominate her body in relation to domination of her memory? The look on her face seems to resist such and her raised fist represents a fight. She seems to me determined, angry, strong, or defiant, expressions consistent with psychological research on Armenian American transmission of trauma (Kalayjian and Weisberg 2002, Sarian 2012). For Crapanzano, this is an image of a young woman who has assumed the wounds of the past (Crapanzano 2011). He describes silencing as a product of violence that reproduces violence in the bodies of youth. While the wound explicitly references the past, the raised fist and the silencing occur in the present.

Figure 4.2 Entry “F” in the Unified Young Armenians’ art contest. Glendale, California. 2010. Photo by author.

Linking Personal and Collective Survivorships

Growing Up to Be Survivors

The autobiographical stories of Liana and Gohar reveal a process of recognition of survivorship they each experienced in reverse from the other. For both women, it was childhood or youth experiences of familial loss that contextualized survivorship. That survivorship was experienced in personal relationships outside the family, and in later life, specifically contexts of activism and academia, and both women expressed the view that their experiences of survivorship were normative. Participation in Armenian American institutions allowed them to practice their memories of personal survivorship as political and collective, each drawing strength from the other. These two women's self-narratives reference Iwona Irwin-Zarecka's description of a "continuum between knowing and acting," "between absorbing meaning and active remembering" involved in the construction of collective memory (Irwin-Zarecka 1994:158).

Having known Liana for several years, I remember that she used to feel un-Armenian. Only recently did she expand her list of self-descriptors, typically including vegan and artist, to include genocide survivor. She expressed understanding of herself as a fighter, a survivor of life, because of personal experiences. In high school, she sat with her father during his death. In an atmosphere of alcohol abuse, she stayed sober. Compared to her older sister, she seemed never good enough, too rebellious, and irresponsible, but she channeled her energy and angst into her art and activism, which she said eventually saved her. She was a survivor of the family circumstances into which

she was born, of depression and anxiety, and of periods of poverty and homelessness. Yet feeling powerful enough to recognize her own strength, she distanced herself from her family to claim that survivorship and become herself. The journey to embrace the Armenian part of her she described as winding, long, and confusing. In college, Liana came to identify with other activists and artists in a variety of causes, from the Occupy Wall Street to pro-Palestine, feminist, and animal welfare movements. Inspired through these relationships, she increasingly described herself as hairy, racially ambiguous, and a warrior in positive and self-empowering ways. Her self-expressions were more directly statements of identification with socially marginalized or oppressed groups, and she began to produce and call upon a sense of self as Lebanese/Syrian/Armenian. From personal experiences, Liana extended her woundedness and survivorship to a collective and intersubjective degree from which her personal sense of self was validated and reproduced.

In one particularly emotional conversation, she said she had forgotten how to play chess and this saddened her. It was her father who had taught her. It was also he who shared family stories of the Armenian genocide with her, and when she thought of the genocide, she thought of him as well. She tried to share with me a story he had told her, the most vivid, about an ancestor who saw another ancestor decapitated by a sword. She was both distressed and apathetic about her inability to recall the details. When her father passed away, she lost her primary means of access to a positive Armenian identification. Without participation in Armenian American organizations,

without behaving the way she thought a proper Armenian American girl should, without her father's memories, Liana doubted her ability to be Armenian American. At times, she expressed that she was wounded by the Armenian American community for marginalizing people like her and she was wounded by loss of memory itself. It was eight years after her father's death, at another family funeral, that she once again heard those stories, spoke a little Armenian, ate a lot of Armenian food, and had a renewed sense of herself as Armenian. Having a positive family experience in the face of loss allowed her to see Armenians as a collectivity of survivors. She suddenly felt that her sense of self as a survivor was that which would allow her to be Armenian American. She took a walking tour of the Armenian shops in her neighborhood, speaking Armenian to strangers and said she felt good doing it. She took a trip to Armenia and began to call it her home. Her conceptualization of Armenian American survivorship was rooted in her personal experience of surviving. When she says, "I am a survivor," she now references a personal and a collective unity of survivorship (comment to author, 2009-2010).

For Gohar, claiming a diasporan Armenian subjectivity of survivorship came much earlier in life. Her personal experiences were influenced by a learned, remembered, and imagined experience of genocide. She told me about her survivorship while we drank coffee at her bus stop, describing her life as a child in Austria: Sunday meals with her grandfather, sitting on the floor by his legs and listening to stories of the past, cooking with her mother, aunts, and sisters in the kitchen. Sometimes, her

grandfather's stories were about the genocide and the family would become quiet and respectful, giving love and attention to listen. When she was in second grade, her parents showed her a film about the genocide, to help her understand what her grandfather talked about. The film was about a boy, who like her grandfather, was deported to Syria, and then traveled to France as a refugee. Gohar said she was traumatized by a particular scene in the film and could not forget it. It affected her emotional state deeply and frightened her. One day at school, during free time on the playground, several girls teased her and said Gohar could not play with them. With her feelings hurt, she picked up a rock and threw it at them in anger. She yelled, "My grandfather is a survivor of genocide. Haven't my family and my people been through enough already?" (Interview, 2009-2010). In her mind, images from the film blurred with her memories of her grandfather's stories. She said that as she yelled at the girls, her mind flashed images of her grandfather living through that traumatic movie scene and she believed what she had seen in the film really happened to her grandfather. The film and the memorized narrative were used as tools to claim personal survivorship, which was structured and conceived within diasporan Armenian survivorship. As an adult, Gohar's career was invested in genocide survivors, and she had worked with a psychotherapist to understand the impact of her grandfather's survivorship and the film's images on her personal sense of self as a survivor.

Sharing Practice of Survivorship

Gohar's experience was not rare. Film has been frequently used to practice and recognize survivorship. It can be considered an "apparatus of cultural memory" and a tool of perception and cognition (Burgoyne 1999, Landsberg 2004, Seremetakis 1994). Robert Burgoyne claims that film allows persons to experience, through a directed "mnemonic and mimetic response," a "suturing" of the self into a collectively conceived past (Burgoyne 1999, Landsberg 2004). It is a medium of memory that positions a collective of viewers to the past through perception as consensus, through which a shared view is reproduced (Seremetakis 1994). I attended a lecture and public showing of approximately twenty minutes of surviving footage of *Ravished Armenia* at a public library in southern California. The event was intended to be commemorative and educational, and was not explicitly political. Its main function, however, was similar to politicized commemoration ceremonies in providing an opportunity for shared experience and recognition of survivorship.

The film follows the general trail of events in Aurora (Arshaluys) Mardiganian's experience from deportation with female relatives in 1915 Ottoman territory to transport in a slave trafficking circuit. After being sold to a group of Chechens, she reportedly escaped north into Russia and then to Scandinavia, from which she emigrated to the United States. The film was produced in Hollywood and based on a 1918 book telling Mardiganian's story, and Mardiganian played herself in the film. Partly because the pacing of the film was thrown off by the salvaging effort and partly because

of the nature of the overly dramatic scenes and hysterical affections common to silent films from the twenties, the audience was overwhelmed. A lady sitting in front of me cried heavily throughout the showing. Men around the room were shaking their heads and grabbing their wives' knees. Teenage brothers fidgeted without looking at each other. Afterward, a collective sigh said "just breathe."

The speaker immediately took the microphone to steer the evening toward a rational conversation and commentary. I am not sure that would have been possible. While realistic images such as photos and films can "prolong the memory of an event so powerfully," they simultaneously indict the process of mourning or response (Zelizer 1998:220). He wished aloud for filmic moments to reflect with Mardiganian on her situation rather than going from dramatic image to image so quickly. He desired to contemplate how Mardiganian re-enacted scenes of genocide and to wonder about her ability to represent them. A woman's voice called out for everyone, "It's too much" (comment to audience, 2009-2010). Then about twenty percent of the people in the audience got up and walked out to get some air, to wipe their tears. Although emotion was slightly disruptive to the speaker's agenda, it also supported it in that it structured experience between images of emotion in the film and those in personal memory (Kleinman, et. al. 1997, Tapias 2006).

I understand this event is as a type of what Thomas Csordas calls an imaginal performance, the "cultural form" of an "imaginative act," an event structured as a shared and expressive self process in which memory and imagination are central and

positioned “in relief” to various “subjective connections to the past” (Csordas 1994:85, Burgoyne 1999). As a shared self process, viewers experienced individual relations to the filmic images and simultaneous interpersonal relations within a group of survivors, including an audience (Seremetakis 1994). Because this event relied on relationships partly structured through film, it could appear as spectacle, “a social relation between people mediated by images” (Debord n.d.[1977]:7). However, the film was not the sole source of images or relations, as individuals called upon their imaginations and memories and situated themselves in a community much broader than that mediated by the film alone. The event involved spectacle only in part and is not the best means of understanding how participants experienced the event. Rather, I understand the film to comprise part of an archive of Armenian American memory that exists along with practices of embodied memory (Taylor 2003). In viewing the film, audience members performed Armenian American acts of memory and witnessing. This event mediated the repertoire in generating embodied knowledge (Stoller 1995, Taylor 2003).

Individually, audience members, like for Gohar, likely experienced an affirmation or influence of memory by the filmic images. When memory images and filmic images were seen as in agreement, personal memory was legitimated and could be taken as continuous, homogeneous, and accurate. Mardiganian’s images of memory operated as an authentic or ideal representative of a shared experience and reinforced and reproduced a collective view that has the ability to “block memory,” “stabiliz[ing] and anchor[ing]” memory to certain “primary markers” (Barthes 1981:91, Zelizer 1998:6).

The filmic images were used to bring close bodies, objects, and events removed by time and place, to "restore what has been abolished," and further, they served to "attest that what I see has indeed existed" (Barthes 1981:82, Benjamin 1968, Seremetakis 1994). The images in the film "ma[d]e visible (for an instant, live now) that which is always there: the ghosts […] that structure our collective and individual lives" (Taylor 2003:143). In this way, the screen acted as "an artificial organ of perception," allowing viewers to perceive "the present image of an object that has […] disappeared" (Seremetakis 1994:48-49). While such perception can "jolt [viewers] into a new embodied awareness[,]" it also threatens to distance them from the object of the past (Stoller 1995:195).

Viewers also individually applied filmic images to "memory's 'thick autonomy,'" evaluating the film as a memorial document according to their memories (Csordas 1994:61). What was recognized through the filmic images – suffering, genocide, displacement – was only recognized as such through the use of memory which made the broken, fragmented filmic data sensible in a particular context (Merleau-Ponty 1958). They produced memory not only in accordance but also in discordance with the film, adding, revising, or subtracting texture, dialogue, and meaning, as well as deciding what of the filmic images was common or extraordinary. The sensory experience of the film was "mediated by memory," "assembled as an act of the imagination" and stood in opposition to both the realism the film was meant to certify and reproduce as well as its potential for "total consumption" (Seremetakis 1994:29). The film was treated as a

survivor, an original remnant itself subjected to practices of memory and self-work. It was not primarily "capital accumulated to the point that it becomes images" (Debord n.d.[1977]:17). Analysis of spectacle and commodification would better serve a study of Mardiganian's own participation in the making and marketing of the film, as her personal lived memories were turned into screened images. The knowledge that Mardiganian was a survivor of genocide acting on screen as a survivor of genocide problematized the distinction between her appearance in the film and her authoritative expression of memory, challenging the divide between spectacular social life and lived memory and between the image and the real.

In one sense, individual viewers "privately felt public memories," but they also publicly felt private memories so that memory was produced as "neither purely individual nor entirely collective but emerge[d] at the interface of individual and collective experience" as a commensal event in which memories and emotions were shared (Landsberg 2004:19, also Seremetakis 1994). Individual experiences of memory took place within an explicitly social context for remembrance and were therefore inseparable from experiencing and imagining others' experiences of memory, not only from experiencing the film. That is, audience members practiced memory as a group, not only as individuals. They were aware of and perceived the expressions of publicly felt memories of others in relation to both the filmic images and to their own memories. However, "in heeding the traditional call to 'remember events as if they happened to [themselves],'" the viewers may have "risk[ed] confusing the shared moment for a

shared memory" (Young 1993:281). Remembering is not only to perceive the ghosts "of others," but also to "make the[ir] experiences one's own" and then respond to a common future in light of this legacy (Young 1993:281).

In parallel to Crapanzano's claim that woundedness is and is not inherited, Barthes explains that the wound (as punctum) is both what is added to the image and what is already there in it (Barthes 1981:55). Perhaps, as for Csordas, "what is being commemorated is, in the first instance, the wounded and suffering self," and the event then was one where representations were inseparable from the self (Csordas 1994:160). In this imaginal performance is demonstration of the dialogue and interdependence of memory and perception in consciousness as images were "energized by" and "energized" memory, each "breathing life" into the other (Zelizer 1998:200, also Bergson 2012[1911], Merleau-Ponty 1958).

"Western Armenia"

At a political rally of thousands, I stood packed in with several elderly men at the edge of the grass while news helicopters circled above. Beside us, a mass of young people and students chanted through bullhorns and pumped the posters they had made that morning in the cordoned-off street. Youth leaders and speakers from various political parties stood on a raised platform, similar to that used at the UYA commemoration service. This time, the banner that served as a backdrop provided a map. As a title, words across the top echoing the familiar chant of "Give us our land," read, "These lands belong to Armenia." The Republic of Armenia was shown in orange,

and colored in red was almost the whole eastern half of Turkey which was labeled "Western Armenia." Activism at such protests is one means by which youth assert their agency in the discourse and practice of producing diaspora (Kasbarian 2013).

Liisa Malkki reminds that culture has often been conceptualized as territorially bound or rooted and that the production of national consciousness by historically displaced groups occurs through local processes that reflect contemporary perceptions of relationality across rupture and estrangement from origins (Malkki 1995). In the Armenian American context, construction of an ancestral homeland is necessary for producing membership in both a "paradigmatic Armenian diaspora," defined in relation to rupture, as well in a cosmopolitan civil society, where estrangement from origins frees a person to the world (Darieva 2011:491). Tsypylma Darieva explains that a relation with a homeland is necessary in the struggle for justice, even if in practice, in her view, the ideal of return is glossed in transformation to volunteer trips and study abroad experiences in Armenia (Darieva 2011). Claiming the land as a homeland allows individuals to claim survivorship of rupture and displacement. Further, the land itself is often conceived as wounded, as in Tsitsernakaberd. During my research, three sites in particular were claimed as ruined and imperceptible Armenian survivors, demanding recognition too. The use of images of these sites was important in construction of a nationalist agenda toward legitimating genocide and survivorship and, in the political context of their use, youth identified with the land, assuming shared wounds with material heritage and territory. In this section, I draw on Yoneyama's claim that

survivors who wish to demonstrate their survivorship sometimes attempt to "[confirm] the materiality of [their] existence […] through the objects that had also survived, despite having suffering irreparable damage" (Yoneyama 1999:76, also Navaro-Yashin 2012).

The first site is that of Holy Cross Church on Akhtamar (or Akdamar, from Turkish) Island at Lake Van near the city of Van, which is often remembered for Armenian nationalist development and Ottoman resistance, and also for the legend of the woman Tamar for whom the island is named. Panossian claims the earliest Armenian kingdom was "centered around Lake Van" (Panossian 2006:34). The second is Ani, remembered as the city of a thousand and one churches and a capital of earlier Armenian kingdoms which was destroyed by invaders in the 13th century, when the capital was moved to Yerevan. Although, as the third, Mount Ararat has been considered "the most fetishized" and mythic representation of historic Armenia, all three of these sites are taken in Armenian American discourse to be quintessentially Armenian (Naficy 2001:165, also Mandel 2003). Yet all three are legally located in Turkey.

Hamid Naficy writes of the experience of Mount Ararat familiar to residents of Yerevan. "On a clear day, […] it is as though pasted to the city. It's so large," and yet it lies across the closed border (Naficy 2001:165). I was lucky enough to be in Armenia on a day of moderately clear skies and traveled by minibus with a tourist group to a site in the hills built especially for viewing the mountain. Isolated in the middle of yellow fields

and rocky hills, it was the only clear structure around, a stone platform with an arched portico on the side of the road. Large steps led to the balcony at the cliff's edge where tourists took photos of the horizon. Lines of poetry were carved into the grey, stone floor, but no one was looking down. We all strained our eyes toward the hazy distance, finally identifying Mount Ararat as the uppermost piece of white in the sky. I was amazed at the size of the mountain, whose crest sat above the clouds. Feeling so far away, I still needed to look up. The mountain shows up in Los Angeles on homemade, indie t-shirts, as the name of an Armenian American newspaper, and in countless student-made films about Armenia. It is ubiquitous in Armenian American shops. Comedians have joked about pictures of Mount Ararat adorning the hallways of Armenian American homes and young people joked with me that "every Armenian American has a framed picture of it somewhere in their house" (comment to author, 2009-2010).

Mount Ararat's significance relies upon its cultural and historical depth (Temelkuran 2010). A traditional narrative dating to at least the fifth century places not only the rebirth of humanity at the foot of Mount Ararat but also the beginning of the Armenian people. According to various tellings, having survived a great flood, Noah landed in his ark on the mountain and disembarking there his descendants dispersed throughout the world. One of Noah's descendants, it is said, was named Hayk.[19] Hayk's descendants remained in the territory surrounding the mountain sharing it with peoples who moved in much later. In Armenian language, Հայ (Hay), pronounced like the

English “Hi,” is the name of the Armenian people. They are said to be Hayk’s descendants in Hayastan, literally the land of the Hay. Identification with Hayk as the descendant of Noah also points to a story of survival, that of the flood and divinely chosen survivorship. Similar narratives have been produced in academia. “Even at the elite level, ‘explanations of Armenian ethnogenesis” that “seek to prove” Armenians have been in the land since “the beginning of time” are common (Panossian 2006:32-33). Armenian and diasporan Armenian nationalism uses a “root-oriented model that describes a nation constantly moving forward to the past reenacting essentially the same story” (Mirzoyan 2010:13).

Reproduced claims to the land produce intimacy in place of distance and nostalgia for the lost (Kasbarian 2013). Intimacy and nostalgia invest emotion in imagination of eastern Turkey in a manner that silences, forgets, or does not perceive other relationships with the same while positing the nostalgic as innocent (Rosaldo 1993[1989]). For example, nationalist claims that “We want our land,” do not perceive that up to a hundred thousand Armenian migrant workers reside in eastern Turkey or that the Turkish government has made efforts to restore heritage sites there. Such claims are positioned over and above Kurdish, Assyrian, Circassian, or other types of relationships to the place. Instead, the discourse entangles the wounded Armenian American collectivity with the land, describing Mount Ararat as a “cut” and the graffitied walls of ruined Armenian churches as “painful” (Interviews, 2009-2010). Here, the land is treated as a wounded remnant and through its intimate relation to Armenian people

affects their bodies and emotional states. This discourse is necessary for Armenians to link recompense for displacement with efforts to recognize genocide. In its restorative dimension, nostalgia operates according to a "narrative plot of conspiracy" in which "home" is "forever under siege, requiring defense against the plotting enemy" (Boym 2001:43). One such defense involves identifying these sites as wounded survivors in order to accuse Turkey of intent to annihilate and remove Armenian presence completely from the land. Like in diaspora, Armenians are remnants of a former whole, the land is also "in diaspora," living in another country as a survivor waiting to be returned. This understanding takes not only the body itself "as the surface on which messages of power [and resistance] are most clearly spelled out" but also the land as the body of the Motherland of Armenia (Seremetakis 1994:66, also Feldman 1991).[20]

The President of Armenia has been attacked in Armenian American discourse and protests for his willingness to concede the loss of lands in eastern Turkey by recognizing the present Turkey-Armenia border. Directed at this position has been the refrain, "We have lost enough already." Two protest signs at a 2009 rally read in English and Armenian, "Serzh Sargsyan, you are not Armenian." To call the President of Armenia "not Armenian" situates survivorship as, at least in this case, predominantly diasporan and anyone who questions that survivorship as legitimate, even the President, can be "excluded," "punished," or "disciplined" (Suny 2001:5). Alla Mirzoyan suggests Armenian politicians have walked a fine line trying to balance a historical consciousness and tradition with regional political and economic structures, and this leads to a clash in

perspectives on the past, particularly across traditional diasporan-Armenian lines (Mirzoyan 2010). This protest poster provides a different view than that espoused by Darieva (Darieva 2011). She claims that U.S. Armenians have little intimacy or attachment to lands in Turkey even when their grandparents lived there. Her research shows that Armenian Americans increasingly turn to the Republic of Armenia as a viable homeland, a representation of homeland, or a step-homeland, because they are not interested in restoring that intimacy (Darieva 2011, Kasbarian 2013). The population among which she conducted research is a different one from that featured in this dissertation, but future studies could attend to overlap and flexibility in Armenian position as well as to the political uses of return. For example, one online commenter suggested that diasporan Armenians should themselves directly negotiate

> "the returns of Western Armenia, overriding [Sargsyan's] idiotig[sic] approach, creating a separate Western and Eastern Armenia, comparable to 'North Korea-South Korea' or 'the past East Berlin-West Berlin'" (Khachaturian 2013).

Beyond the Armenian government's perceived ability to recognize and struggle for Western Armenia as such, Turkey and Turkish organizations have been vilified in Armenian American nationalist discourse for neglect and injury of the landscape. While Mount Ararat occupies a constant place in the discourse, an outbreak of public disappointment, offense, and even outrage was the response to the restoration and conversion of an Armenian church by the government of Turkey into a state museum. While the Turkish government could have been viewed as a savior of material Armenian culture, preserving its perceptibility from destruction and ruin, it was instead attacked

for violating a sacred Armenian space. In 2010, Armenians from around the world were invited to come to a mass at the church-museum of Akhtamar, the first in over ninety years, but this was quickly labeled a publicity stunt by an Armenian American newspaper. The Turkish government was accused of trying to "score points with Europeans and Americans" in a bid for European Union membership by appearing friendly to a displaced minority (Sassounian 2010a).[21] The "Top Three Armenian Church Leaders," including the Catholicos, head of the Armenian Apostolic church, reportedly boycotted the event, refusing their invitations (Sassounian 2010a). One referred to the ceremony as "orchestrated by Turkey in an attempt to obscure its consistent policy of denying the Armenian Genocide and the rights of its survivors" (Sassounian 2010b, also Göksel 2010).

In conversations with me, some protested that the Armenian Apostolic Church was not given full authority over the reconstruction project. Children in Armenian American schools wrote into newspapers decrying the lack of a cross atop the cupola (it had been deemed too heavy to be supported by the rooftop). Although the mass was attended by a number of Armenians, up to four thousand perhaps, arguments about who owned and should control the site became was the focal point of the debate and a little more than a month later, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H. Res. 306 that urged Turkey to "return confiscated church properties" (Royce 2011, also Göksel 2010). It should be noted, however, that the position I have described ignores that the restoration effort involved meetings of Turkish and Armenian architects in New York

City, that it was unofficially negotiated by representatives of both Turkish and Armenian Ministries of Culture, and that both Turkish-Armenians and diasporan Armenians visited Akhtamar "to assess restoration requirements" (Phillips 2005:78).

In 2011, an *Elle Turkey* fashion spread was described as rubbing salt in the wounds of the Akhtamar injury. European models were shown posing as sexy adventurers in the ancient ruins of Ani, including inside a church. One reporter wrote that Ani had been "reduced to a backdrop" and was "left abandoned by a Turkish government eager to let the sands of time erase the evidence" of the Armenian genocide (Yekikian 2011). According to the editor of Ianyan Magazine, the "fashion faux pas" "reopened old wounds" (Aghajanian 2011). On the Fashion Gone Rogue website which made the photos available, 156 comments included:

> "Hate Turkey."
> "The buildings […] are in grieving, since their owners were murdered and deported."
> "Tasteless."
> "Would we want to see Naomi Campbell posing in […] a burned out synagogue?" [fashiongonerogue 2012].

The first and last accuse Turkey in general of genocide equivalent to the Holocaust. The second references the intimacy between the Armenian people who were displaced and the material landscape. As in a number of Armenian-accented films, the material sites and contemporary survivors in diaspora are conceived as dwelling together in a shared experience of woundedness (Basso 1996, Low 2003, Navaro-Yashin 2012, Naficy 2001). Sometimes, use of the Armenian name of a place is use to call up

the intimacy and nostalgia, engaging a "specific human relation" with a spatialized object of memory (Navaro-Yashin 2012:44, also Basso 1996). The use of the name Western Armenia can be understood as a strategy of appropriation that is linked to a certain Armenian American subjectivity and politics (Basso 1996, Navaro-Yashin 2012). As described by Michel de Certeau, this kind of strategy delimits a place as the subject's own and becomes the site of power directed toward exteriorities including threats and enemies (De Certeau 1984). One effect of this strategy is the reproduction of knowledge as "mastery" of distant places to bring them under the power of the subject's own gaze and to sense them as intimately related to self processes (De Certeau 1984:36).

A DVD I purchased from an Armenian American shop serves as another example of the type of engagement with the homeland youth might experience. Titled *Western Armenia: Lost Motherland*, the documentary takes the viewer on a journey through places in "the historical Armenian land," and it includes both heritage sites like Ani and unique points of interest like a sanctuary for Van cats (Harutyunyan 2007). Calling out and producing intimacy, the back of the DVD cover states that "you are sure to find something dear to your heart!" (Harutyunyan 2007). Similarly to *Ravished Armenia*, this film provides a means for an Armenian Armenian subject to "make places habitable" through use of imagination and memory (De Certeau 1984:106). It aims to be believable although "the discourse that makes people believe" and feel is the same that "never delivers what it promises" (De Certeau 1984:105). While representing Western Armenia as habitable it is simultaneously conceived as full of absences and ruins. "What can be

seen designates what is no longer there" as each site or image of a place is filled to the brim with meaning of the past or what could have been still inhabited (De Certeau 1984: 108, Feldman 1991). Such practices delimit a wounded homeland into a particularly Armenian American survivorship that demands recognition. It also distinguishes Armenian Americans as diasporans from the homeland, asking for "Western Armenian culture" to be recognized as distinct within a global Armenian identity (Chahinian 2013).

Conclusion

When a palimpsest of survivorships is called upon for political purposes, the subject is "doubly constituted as both the agent of speech and as one who is subjected to a discursive paradigm" (Yoneyama 1999:93, also Fassin 2008). Crapanzano describes this "paradox" as the past lying "across the throats" of younger generations of survivors (Crapanzano 2011:186). "They want to preserve what happened" and make it visible and voiced "without knowing [firsthand] exactly what happened" (Crapanzano 2011:186). Yet, just because the past is at their throats does not mean it can be spoken, for, in his view, they are wounded by the knowledge and the partiality of that knowledge of the past. Images of silencing then, from the old woman with her hands over her mouth to the young woman whose mouth is taped, point to various overlapping wounds, from the difficulty of voicing trauma to that partiality. Along with multifaceted survivorship come multiple experiences of woundedness that are not shunned, but rather engaged in order to practice and claim that survivorship for political ends. In another perspective, it could be that "suffering itself survives" in the lives of

young people who find “its explanation” to be the “result of ideological work of framing remembrance” (Irwin-Zarecka 1994:60).

To recognize oneself as a survivor is more complicated then than voicing a separation from those who are dead. Although Yoneyama describes survivorship as primarily a “demarcation between the dead and the living,” it is also to understand one’s survivorship to be reliant upon identification with the dead, displaced, suffering, and ruined (Yoneyama 1999:103). As “survivor-descendant[s],” young people inhabit, through practices of memory and imagination, a “lifeworld” and a “deathworld” simultaneously (Kidron 2010:444,448). Doing so also allows them to scaffold, or “stand in the gap between,” subjective personal experience and “collective representations,” as the sections above demonstrate (Kidron 2010:431, also Csordas 1994). This chapter emphasizes practices of memory that engage paradigmatic and realist images of woundedness because such images “have become entwined in [the] capacity to remember” genocide as its survivors and thereby in the reproduction of survivorship (Zelizer 1998:13).

Chapter 5 | Living Memory as Resistance

In the hunger strike which is the focus of this chapter, I address a public, collective experience as a means of protest in in which personal sacrifice is meant to contribute to a greater cause. In this sense, it was an act of "strategic resistance" or "self-determination" in which the behavior of youth activists was "rooted in a deliberate critique of [their] circumstances" (Ginwright, Noguera, and Cammarota 2006:335, Halberstam 1993:195). I largely view this political act as a performance, a "reiterative process" with "potential for historical specificity, transition, and individual cultural agency" (Taylor 2003:14-15). In performing woundedness and survivorship, the protestors embraced pain and discomfort as personal costs of the struggle for justice. Their willingness to go without food in the cold outdoors can be interpreted as reflective of their commitment to and investment in that struggle. Directed externally, the protestors wanted to affect a political situation, hopeful that their sacrifice would bring a policy change. They also intended to educate several publics about their woundedness, on which the political effort to recognize genocide rests and which distinguishes them as a collective of Armenian American survivors. Directed internally, the protest was a means of sensing the past in one's body, reproducing the imagined sensations and feelings of ancestors who experienced genocide, and participating in a collective repertoire of memory (Taylor2003). This can be interpreted as a response to Vincent Crapanzano's claim in the previous chapter that young people are wounded by partial, second-hand knowledge of the past for which they yet feel a responsibility

(Crapanzano 2011). Especially if, as Carol Kidron's research shows, verbal transmission of traumatic memory is fragmented, then younger generations could be motivated to obtain information about the past in their bodies as a more direct means of knowledge (Kidron 2012). Somewhat ironically, it is the knowledge of past woundedness in the body of the contemporary survivor that eases the woundedness of the cognitive absence. One wound is displaced temporarily by another. This experience of living memory is conceived as "variously resistant" to forms of forgetting associated with historical archives and official histories (Roach 1996, Taylor 2003).

Hunger Strike

I was reading and taking notes at an Armenian coffeeshop in Pasadena, and when I pulled up the Internet to take a mental break, I went to check the local news. That was where I saw one of the leading stories in an online Armenian American newspaper, announcing the first day of an Armenian Youth Federation (AYF) hunger strike in Glendale. I immediately packed my stuff away, paid my bill, and got in my car. Being rush-hour, it took me at least double the time to get to there, but when I arrived at the intersection of Glenoaks and Central, it was not hard to miss the activity in the park. Emboldened by the orange sunset, the red sweatshirts of the AYF youth identified which individuals were involved in the hunger strike. Over the noise of the freeway behind me, honking and yelling came from the other side of the park. A large banner hanging on the corner, over the freeway below, read "Stop the Protocols" (Armenian Youth Federation 2009). Three young men walked between the waiting vehicles passing

out flyers to some drivers. I tried to catch any of their eyes, but they passed by my car. I rolled down my window and stuck my arm out waving them to come back. The young man who approached with a flyer looked hesitant and skeptical of me.[22] "You want one? [Pause] Oh" (comment to author, 2009-2010). He sounded as if it were strange of me to ask for one. The handout, titled "Reading Between the Lines," broke down the concerns of the protestors (Armenian Youth Federation 2009).

Taking place in the days just before the Turkey-Armenia Protocols were to be signed in October 2009, the hunger strike demanded that the President of Armenia back out of the arrangement. The Protocols, heavily endorsed by the United States, were to open diplomatic relations between Turkey and Armenia. As mentioned in chapter 2, Turkey closed its border to Armenia in the nineties as a response to Armenian claims to and war over Nagorno-Karabagh. Turkey has maintained that Nagorno-Karabagh does not have the right to self-determination today, in part because it is populated by a majority of Armenians and has a pro-Armenian government. The Protocols were to establish a rule of nonintervention in the affairs of other states, which the flyer identified as a point of contention. It explained that the independence of Nagorno-Karabagh would be threatened by the Protocols and that Armenians would potentially lose the rights to what should be their land. The protestors referenced Nagorno-Karabagh with the Armenian name of Artsakh, pointing to a historical period of Armenian claim to the territory. A second point raised on the flyer was that claims to "Western Armenia," or eastern Turkey as discussed in chapter 4, would be forfeited. In

opening the border, the Protocols would require Armenia's recognition of the Turkish border at its present location, and the protestors argued for a border further west, returning to Armenians their homeland. The third point concerned genocide and its denial. By establishing a joint historical commission to study claims of genocide and generally the history of Armenian displacement and violence in the Ottoman Empire, the protestors claimed that the country of Armenia would itself renege its survivorship. The flyer and the activists I spoke with demanded that diplomatic relations be opened with Turkey only upon several preconditions including recognition of the genocide.

I found a parking space several blocks away in a residential neighborhood and walked past a basketball game, a bus stop full of people, and a line of customers outside a restaurant before the road curved around pointing me toward the park. I reached the corner, at the office building where the Armenian Consulate was located, and I realized the protest was directed this way, at the representation of the Republic of Armenia. Posters meant to educate about the Armenian genocide were displayed on the sidewalk and a young man stood with one on the median in the middle of Glenoaks. In this orientation, I identified a double interest, as did the Persian American man who once asked me, "Why do they protest here? Is their protest directed to the United States *and* to Armenia?" (comment to author, 2009-2010). In statements made at the hunger strike, I repeatedly heard reference to "the government" and "our government," and it was almost always unclear to me, at least, which government was referenced. I have come to believe that both U.S. and Armenian governments were the targets of the

protest although the flyer, newspaper articles, and post-protest conversations all indicated that Armenia and the Armenian government were the key audiences. An AYF newsletter quoted one protestor, "We're here to make our voices heard to the Armenian Consulate and the government in Yerevan" (Armenian Youth Federation 2009). Armenian Americans have been viewed as a resource that the Armenian government could use or ignore according to its own agendas. At times, the relationship between the two polities has been distanced, even estranged, but as this hunger strike as well as the more recent 2013 Barevolution of Raffi Hovannisian show,[23] Armenian Americans are perceived as a group to be called upon when needed politically. Their use in Armenian politics encourages them to act as members of the nation with the perceived right to voice their interests and to be recognized for that right. Added to the urge to act as legitimate survivors in contrast to Armenia's perceived survivalists forgetters of genocide (reference chapter 4), Armenian Americans have expressed a responsibility to participate in national politics across a transnational space.

In typical AYF style, a few individuals carried electrified bullhorns and others clipboards full of papers. A variety of adults stood in groups in the park, chatting, thinking, looking around. Crates full of water bottles were stacked around benches and tree trunks. Sleeping bags, pillows, and backpacks were arranged in a pile on a plastic tarp. The atmosphere was electric on the first night of the protest when perhaps protestors weren't too hungry yet, excited and hopeful. Girls with long hair ran holding hands to an area behind the bushes to whisper, glancing suspiciously at the young man

texting near the corner. The young people were like electrons bouncing in random orbits around the groups of older people, their leaders and supporters. When I crossed the street, I was met by a group of four protestors waiting to hand out more flyers at the next light. First, I met Natalie, with disheveled brown hair, who smiled, who was so skinny and had wrapped a thick brown blanket around herself like a cape. Then two young men took a few steps closer. They were wrapped up together inside a large Armenian flag that was so thin it could only keep them warm symbolically. They fired questions and one-liners at me.

> "We're not going to school this week. Our teachers told us to come here" (comment to author, 2009).
> "I called Fox 11 News and they said they're sending Jane Yamamoto to do a story on us!" (comment to author, 2009).
> "You should talk to our leader" (comment to author, 2009).
> "How did you hear about this?" (comment to author, 2009).

I asked one young man to point out his leader, but he did so vaguely and half-heartedly. He pointed to a group of about twenty people and said, "He's over there," and then turned and walked away (comment to author, 2009). Although it was he who had suggested I talk to the leader, I thought that he was wary or ambivalent about being the one to open the door of access to me. As mentioned in previous chapters, the AYF had a de facto policy of keeping odars at bay, which was part of its institutionalized practice of cultural preservation. So, while they wanted to be covered by a mainstream news channel for the evening news, they likely would not think about inviting an odar anthropologist to the event. This is why, although the protest was in a public park, I

wanted to make sure to introduce myself to the proper authorities and get their permission to conduct research. They want to be recognized, but not feel "infiltrated" or "spied on" (Interview, 2009-2010).[24]

Since I was not sure about whom exactly to speak, I began introducing myself to men I thought looked like they might be charge. One man was wearing a suit and held a walkie talkie. Another was a friendly, tall man with a big, white beard and I noticed many protestors had been talking with him. No, neither of these was the leader. The third man was perhaps one of the authorities behind the scenes. He stood still and silently, observing activities around him, as if nodding in approval or wincing at little mishaps, like the director of a play. We shook hands and he said he had heard of my name before. I remembered that we had spoken on the phone once, in a conversation where he asked the questions and I explained my academic interests. He said he would take my requests into consideration and get back to me, but he never did, and I knew why. His answer was no. This time, he called Hovik over. "This is the man I believe you are looking for," he said to me (comment to author, 2009). To Hovik, he introduced me and then said he also wanted to speak with Hovik about sister protests in Beirut and Paris as well as a recent Wall Street Journal article. I understood the tone of these statements to display his real authority.

He stood with Hovik and me as we talked, it seemed taking mental notes on our conversation and monitoring Hovik's statements. Hovik, in a cold, awkward, or maybe distracted manner avoided making eye contact. He described himself as an engineering

student with many AYF responsibilities and let me know it was okay for me to hang out at the protest if I were sensitive and respectful of the youth. When I asked how the idea of holding a hunger strike had been born, he looked to the man next to him, and hesitated. I asked, "Was there a particular young person in the group who suggested it?" I got the feeling that the youth may have had nothing to do with the decision, and Hovik suggested that the idea had just come up in conversation. He did not say with whom, youth, his own superiors, or perhaps the media. Perhaps the idea did in fact arise in discussion of various forms of protest, but the degree to which the decision had moved down the chain of command is still unknown.

This experience validated Judith Halberstam's claim that while protests like this one are highly emotional events they nevertheless often direct, control, and harness that emotion into the organizational structure of the event itself rather than asserting it towards that which they wish to show resistance (Ginwright, Noguera, and Cammarota 2006, Halberstam 1993). She claims that in a tradition of protest what often develops is an "overemphasis on organization" (Halberstam 1993:189). One reason for this development might be that the AYF protestors sought to legitimate themselves in this tradition through reenactment of both remembered genocide and previous protests (Feldman 1991). Another may be that Armenian American protestors feel they walk a thin line between demanding recognition and being perceived as threatening others (Halberstam 1993, Mandel 2003). The effect on youth protestors can manifest in their prioritizing the inward direction of the event over the external. This means that a

political hunger strike becomes the means of self-work and community building, for some the primary object of the event. It was the event through which the diaspora, the AYF, and the nation produced political subjects in the bodies of its young people, "engendering itself" (Feldman 1991:115).

Having passed through the appropriate gates, I leaned against a tree near a group of moms. We smiled and nodded hello. Then I heard Hovik's voice through a bullhorn speaker. He gathered the protestors together. There were over 30 youth on strike. Everyone else ringed up around them. It was a group of about seventy people, and it was suddenly very quiet. Hovik gave words of encouragement to his youth and reminded them of the cause for which they struggled. He used phrases like "save and direct your strength" (protest speech, 2009). Then he said,

> "There are many people coming here to support you. We are proud of you. But I must remind you to speak only to your leaders. It is not your job to speak to anyone outside of your group. Speak only to your leaders!" [protest speech, 2009].

That message was for me as much as it was the youth. While he had granted me his approval to be there with the protestors, he then effectively barred them from interaction with me. Granted, it was a public park, but it was a closed-access event as would be any birthday party or romantic date. So I did not directly approach any youth or ask them any questions during the protest to avoid causing them to disrespect their leader. Yet I came to the park in every spare moment I could over the next three days. I

spoke with the families and supporters of the protestors and with protestors who came to talk to me of their own choice.

Sitting under one of the trees or on a park bench, I watched the normal dramas of life play out, each day increasingly more lethargic. Girls no longer giggled and ran but slowly walked together to the bathroom in a nearby building and returned with new hair and makeup. People lay in sleeping bags whispering to one another and playing games or just watching the city life move around them. By the third day, the voice of the protest clearly sounded like that of the adults who were not fasting or sleeping in the park each night. When a police officer showed up, it was the older men smoking on the sidewalk who spoke with him for 30 minutes. It was they who stood for hours waving the flag over passing traffic and who propped up the posters. Many people came to show solidarity with the youth protestors. Once a group of elderly Armenian Americans came to sing patriotic songs in Armenian with them. Parents, friends, and former AYF activists showed up to give a pat on the back and provide assistance however needed, like bringing a new jacket or dropping off homework. Several younger siblings had been taken out of school to come and be with their older brothers and sisters. One little boy colored on the ground while his mother explained to me that she wanted him to see his older brother as a role model.

While I did not witness any displays of opposition to the protest in the park, a protestor told me she had heard some negative comments from her friends who had chosen not to participate. Again, Hovik presented contradictory information. When I

had asked him if he had experienced any critical or negative feedback, he acted as if I should be ashamed to ask such a thing – of course not, he suggested. Online, I observed direct comments of disdain and disapproval, and months later, when I met the family of one of the hunger strikers in a large group of people, I got the impression many were biting their tongues so as not to say anything that would offend them. It is easier on the Internet, perhaps, for some to say what they really think to no one in particular, and in that space, I found a variety of comments and conversations criticizing the hunger strike.[25] Some found it too extreme. Others found it elitist, divisive, flashy, and/or insincere. It seemed elitist to one person because many, if not all, of the students who were let out of school attended private Armenian schools, and flashy because of the heroic staging of the protestors. Some people viewed the event as a well-orchestrated show where protestors posed for photos and acted out a dramatic protest according to an institutionalized script. A popular image of the protest serves as an example. While there are many photographs of the event on the Internet, in some of which youth pose in front of the tree-hung flag or huddle in conversation, in a widely reproduced image, youth sit in a line, side by side, on the sidewalk appearing to be locked up together. They were not really chained up although the image suggests so. They have tape over their mouths. The young men foregrounded seem to be concentrating on their objective, staring ahead at the Consulate. Their faces are serious and dedicated. The hands that are visible are grasped around the chains in the appearance of fists.

A man in Armenia, almost laughing derisively across the Internet at this image, commented that the protest was not close to a real hunger strike. Actually, he implied, it mocks individuals who have gone on actual hunger strikes. He was unable to imagine this group of protestors, whom he might describe as protected and privileged, as serious about going hungry to the point of death. The staged photo opportunity shows them to look serious in facial expression, but this man did not believe them. Others I later spoke with about the event also thought it no coincidence that the hunger strike began only four or five days before the protocols were to be signed. The protestors were not planning to continue the strike after the signing and so they were never to be in danger of starvation, malnutrition, or ill health. To some, the suffering of the protestors was a "so-called suffering," nothing more than what some people do for health or spiritual reasons, fast for four days (comment to author, 2010). Although some of the protestors referred to their action as fasting, the official name of the event was "Hunger for Justice" to "Stop the Protocols" (AYF 2009a, AYF 2009b, StoptheProtocols). Most criticism came from the perspective that took the event and the practice of hunger striking as singularly political. In statements made by the youth, however, the political is motivated by or intertwined with a desire to embody the past. This factor contributes to the difference in position, and even a misunderstanding perhaps, between the Armenian American protestors and the man in Armenia. The act was political and directed externally, but it was also inwardly experienced and oriented where the protestors used their bodies in a more complicated manner.

Hunger striking is “the most familiar form of self-inflicted suffering” in activism, and a more approachable experience to perform in activism, in contrast to beheadings, rapes, and other forms of violence commonly remembered of genocide (Biggs 2003:12). Here it has double significance as both a commonly recognized protest and a practice of Armenian American remembrance. In fiction, film, testimonies, and historical accounts, starvation is named one of the main causes of death of Armenians who were deported under Ottoman authority (Akçam 2012, Avakian 2006, Hovannisian 2007, Miller and Miller 1993). In his autobiographical-inspired novel, for example, *The Sandcastle Girls*, the best-selling author, who is identified as Armenian American, Chris Bohjalian depicts repeatedly images of starving orphans who attempt to steal kafta from the plate of sleeping guards, of donated flour going to waste at refugee camps where there is no water to make bread much less drink, and of children in a refugee camp picking through horse manure for anything they can eat (Bohjalian 2011). Reproduced survivors’ accounts have commonly included experiences of hunger along deportation marches and popularized photos of Armenian refugees show them to be extremely emaciated and bony.

I did observe a student skit at a genocide commemoration service, held for the public at a high school, in which a different kind of genocidal violence was portrayed. Heavy rock music played in the background and the stage was surrounded by blackness. The spotlights illuminated young women, probably high school students, running in crouched form, falling, dragging one another to left stage. Young men dressed in red

sashes, I assume representative of soldiers, ran and jumped after them holding up weapons and screaming wildly, slashing at the air. This skit lasted only a few minutes and while it represented atrocity and terror, it did so abstractly and loosely, leaving much to imagination and calling upon the knowledge of viewers to fill in meanings at will. On stage, it was an explicit representation not meant to literally produce the (re)experience of terror. In the hunger strike, in contrast, the youth protestors attempted to achieve such experience, considering themselves only secondarily actors and firstly as physical and cultural remnants who tried to sense and approximate starvation.

Bearing Witness

In its internal directionality, the protestors established particular relations with the past in an attempt to attain "perceptual completion" or "restored behavior" (Roach 1996:3, Seremetakis 1994:7). Demonstrating that the "perception of history is irrevocably tied to the history of sensory perception," the protest involved youth participants in a paradigmatic quest to recover and produce meaning through particular sensations conceived as intrinsically connected to the Armenian genocide (Feldman 1994:407). Their sensations of hunger and cold became "witnesses or record-keepers" (Seremetakis 1994:6). Yet distanced by time and place from the full event which they witnessed through the senses, in a generational experience of postmemory, the protestors not only "recall[ed]" the past but also attempted to "imagin[e,]" "creat[e]," and "project" it as their senses were utilized to produce the past (Hirsch 2008:107). As

protest, this practice of imagination was utilized to “destabilize” or challenge the real situation in which youth found themselves located as survivors (Halberstam 1992:199). Further, as they sought to “reactivate and reembody [the] more distant” “memorial structures” of their ancestors, they found their knowledge partial, reaffirming Das’ claim that “witnessing is not all or nothing” (Hirsch 2008:111, Das 2007:102). In this “embodied performance,” the past was not only repeated but birthed in “transmission” and “transformation” out of an experiential present “void” (Roach 1996:3, Seremetakis 1994:7).

Regarding those who experienced genocide, the dead both victims and survivors, as the “ultimate source of authenticity,” the protestors idealized the past which they attempted to (re)experience (Yoneyama 1999:142, Seremetakis 1994). They firstly claimed a certain contemporary survivorship which allowed them to establish these relations with the past through which they reproduced wounds of genocide in their bodies. Their efforts provided them legitimate membership in the struggle for justice and granted them “authority and power” to narrate survivorship “without error” (Yoneyama 1999:142, also Azarian-Ceccato 2010). It reproduced a prescribed memory according to this authority which served the interests of institutions like the AYF (Feldman 2003). Further, claiming the authority of this experience in their bodies, the protestors meant to demonstrate that within Armenian American activism is a high form of attestation of survivorship. In this way, the internal directionality itself was put on display for external viewers, both the government of Armenia and Armenian American

public. This political hunger strike was founded on the experience of the past so when critics spoke negatively about the protestors, it was potentially interpreted as attack on one's deep survivorship.[26]

One afternoon, I sat on a park bench near the protestors who huddled in groups of four or five amongst their sleeping bags and blankets. Leaves blew around my feet, and one hunger striker in sweats and glasses walked around and around me trying to stretch his legs or get some adrenaline flowing, but he grew tired quickly and plopped down at the other end of the bench. He looked like he needed a cup of coffee. We made small talk, and he slumped back into the curved bench with his head dropping forward and his arm dangling over the armrest, squinting in the shade of the trees. I could not tell if he fell asleep. About a week after the strike was over, I saw a video on Youtube in which this same young man explains what he plans to do during the protest. On camera, he is so much more energetic and certain.

> "We're basically gonna keep ourselves hungry just to remind ourselves of what our ancestors went through [pause], and the same protocols, that he's gonna sign, that's gonna eliminate our ancestors from history, 'the genocide that never happened' and, just like how they said yesterday, we're doing 1% of what they did, and just to get the feeling [pause] and just so everyone knows what we're going through and the struggle the Armenian people are going through this next week until these protocols get signed" [Armenian Youth Federation 2009a].

His first statement is one of remembrance, not of protest, and it is a remembrance that is located in physical sensation. His body, through chosen sensations of hunger, literally reminds him of his ancestors. In his view, it is necessary to remind himself of them because he fears they will be erased from history if he does not.

Because this is his initial response to the question asked and also because he acknowledges that the protocols are going to be signed anyway, I understand the deeper motive or desire of his participation to lie in this stated objective of "get[ing] the feeling" (AYF 2009a). He prioritized his own sensation of hunger as relevant regardless of the political outcome of the protest although completely intertwined with it as a political experience. The relation he establishes with the past is one of synecdochal surrogation. As a surrogate, he is a substitute, standing in place in the present for past persons. His hunger is a replacement in the present for the starvation of Armenians during genocide so that he "cop[ies] the world in order to comprehend it in [his] bod[y]" (Stoller 1995:41). In that he quantified and minimalized his ability to surrogate, "doing one percent," he acknowledges his temporal separation from the real starvation that he imagines his ancestors, real or symbolic, experienced (Armenian Youth Federation 2009a). The physical time of the present attains a "feeling of pastness" for him, as he experiences hunger as a remnant extending chronologically and continuously from the past (Das 2007:107). It is a homogeneous and spatialized experience of time in which he is situated as a subject in the present, and this experience of time references a particular bodily orientation, what Roach considers a "kinesthetic imagination" that allows the young man to position himself in the remembered genealogy of bodily experience (Roach 1996:33, also Das 2007). In acknowledging the partiality of his experience and knowledge, he admits that this surrogation fails to achieve total perceptual completion (Nelson 1999, Roach 1996). His surrogation is then given as an

index of past experience (Azarian-Ceccato 2010). In this way, he also treats his bodily experience of hunger as a sacrifice, in which he substitutes in his body the whole of past remembered suffering or the whole of the Armenian nation. Taking the responsibility upon himself to represent the woundedness of others, his sacrifice reminds that "cultural resistance inspires the production of fragments" in order both to defend the intimate, remaking the body politic through the one body, and as "counterpractice" to more powerful "agendas" (Feldman 1991:11). While this young man calls upon his agency as a survivor here, he is also a replaceable alternate in that the genealogical structure of the cultural formation is valued over his individuality and person (Taylor 2003).

Surrogation also points to the "stillness," the still present quality of wounds of genocide the protestor claims mark him (Seremetakis 1994). To perceive the stillness of something is to realize that it has been present all along but has suddenly become perceptible. The protestor's "remind[ing]" himself is the production of memory entangled in perception of hunger as the wound through which he more fully recognizes himself as a survivor (Armenian Youth Federation 2009a). For Henri Bergson, recognition is the function of memory, which exists to enable agency. Recognition is the tangible, sensory, and physical process of grasping the past in the present and the rise of memory to meet a present perceived condition or sensation (Bergson 2012[1911]). Although the protest was produced as a political event in relation to a political context, the experience of synecdochal surrogation allowed this youth to recognize the agency of

the past, at least partially, in himself as he recognized himself in relation to his ancestors.

Each night of the hunger strike, a different program of events was scheduled to involve the community and to entertain and energize the protestors. Speakers exhorted the youth who also shared in song and recitation about their memories and thoughts during the strike. One of these recitations I also found on Youtube, a video of a young woman reading aloud her poem at a kind of open-mic night. Originally titled "Sitting on the Sidewalk," it was later uploaded as "A Poem For My Pain" (AYF 2009b, StoptheProtocols). It is important to note the change in name from that which directly references the woman's physical location and bodily posture in the present to that which more abstractly but explicitly references her woundedness and literary expression that voices it. She reads,

> "I hear them saying, 'Wake her up,' but my body is numb.
> Each of my legs feel like giant tree trunks, filled with a constant hum.
> There is a man playing the drums in my head,
> And my nose feels like it's been in a freezer, completely red.
> I finally get my layered body to rise.
> All these overlapped clothes are telling lies.
> Because I am not warm! The fierce cold fights through all the barriers on my body.
> And all I want is to hold on tight to somebody.
> As we gather on the sidewalk with our mouths taped, holding signs, locked in chains
> I stare at the building 1-0-0-0 North Central and remember the pain,
> The pain of my ancestors, the pain of the 1.5 million
> And I remember the willingness of our government to allow them to be forgotten.
> Suddenly I don't feel so cold, suddenly I'm not so hungry or weak.
> I have the strength to ignore the warmth which my toes seek.

> I have the courage to ignore the groaning monster in my stomach.
> Nothing else matters. Not food. Not comfort. Not warmth … Our hope and determination is stuck.
> I will stay here with your support, along with all my fellow fasters,
> Because nobody can take away what is rightfully ours.
> All of our voices ARE being heard and WILL continue to be heard"
> [Armenian Youth Federation 2009b, StoptheProtocols.com].

The relation this young woman establishes with the past can be described as prosthetic, which is a type of surrogation. The prosthesis substitutes for that which is perceived to be instrumentally lacking and, in practice, it extends agency, perception, and action and can incorporate alterity into subjectivity (Connerton 1989, Landsberg 2004, Lury 1998, Nelson 1999, Nelson 2001). The prosthesis in this case is the sensation of historical hunger, that of the "starving Armenian" (refer to chapter 2). As a prosthesis, this sensation of hunger is differentiated from regular, everyday sensations of hunger in its functionality and performance. The historic hunger she senses is the means by which she extends her own experience of herself. This is not to say that the woman experienced a fragmented or powerless sense of self without use of this prosthesis, nor did she straightforwardly exploit the body of another as a prosthesis for her own profit. While theoretical use of the prosthesis in the ethnographic work of Diane Nelson, Suzana Sawyer, and Melissa Wright demonstrates its ability to critique idealized notions of body, body politic, and labor relations, and that of Alison Landsberg, Susan Buck-Morss, and Robert Burgoyne show it useful in understanding the experience of the self through commodified images, in this case, neither the hunger striker nor the prosthesis is best understood as "dismembered" or "stumped," and her hunger as the prosthesis is

not to be taken as a mass-produced commodity form used to re-member or replace her organic body (Nelson 1999:314, also Burgoyne 1999, Landsberg 2004, Lury 1998, Nelson 2001, Sawyer 2002, Seremetakis 1994, Wright 2001). In using the prosthesis as a type of surrogation, I am interested in its functional and performative potential in self-work, perceived as useful by the hunger striker for a particular task involved in a becoming or recognizing. I call upon Maurice Merleau-Ponty's notion of bodily intentionality and Celia Lury's notion of the experimental self in this regard, treating the prosthesis as a tool of extension and incorporation chosen temporarily for its perceptual enhancements to act (Lury 1998, Merleau-Ponty 1958). While Paul Connerton would emphasize the performance of the hunger strike as the means of memory transfer and production, theories of relationality envision practices of surrogation and prosthesis as the structural points of transfer (Connerton 1989). This is then to say that the protestor produced the hunger as alterity that is incorporated in order to produce a certain relation to the past. Also, placing this idea in the context of Merleau-Ponty's and Henri Bergson's views of memory, I would not wish to treat the hunger striker's memory itself as the result of a prosthetic commodity form of mass culture as doing so would do violence to the bodies of both hunger strikers and those who experienced hunger in genocide (Baudrillard 2010[1994], Bergson 2012[1911], Feldman 1994, Landsberg 2004, Merleau-Ponty 1958).

For this protestor, hunger is not so much the means of reminding herself, rather she expresses some surprise at its ability to remind. Unlike the young man previously referenced, her hunger eflects her agency directed to use the past in the production of

survivorship and her individuality is not subsumed into a lineage of replaceable surrogates. She allows the past to "embed" or "sediment" itself in attachment to her, giving her agency over to, through the act of extension, "the past to reconquer, by actualizing itself, the influence it had lost" (Eng and Kazanjian 2003:234, Connerton 1989:72, Bergson 2012[1911]:169, also Nelson 1999). "Her memory work reconstitutes her experiences" (Yoneyama 1999:120). The subjectivity she practices exists in a relation that, while constituting also dispossesses, as a "way of being for another" or a way of being "by virtue of another" while being oneself (Butler 2004:24). Susette Min suggests that this form of relation with the past may prevent mourning (Eng and Kazanjian 2003). This elaborates upon the claim that Armenian mourning has been interdicted by suggesting that processes of survivorship are at least partly involved in that interdiction. She writes that mourning the loss of an external object is more easily accomplished than mourning an internalized object or element of one's subjectivity. To mourn a part of one's self would require greater intensity and a forced rearticulation of subjectivity, potentially compromising the resolve the young woman expresses at the end of her poem (Eng and Kazanjian 2003).

In contrast to the young man's surrogation, which is oriented toward aligning subjectivity and agency with an indexed original, the young woman's use of prosthesis more directly rotates memory to the appeal of the present (Bergson 2012[1911], Das 2007). This attitude is expressed in her poem when halfway through she throws off sensations of hunger and cold to contrast herself with her ancestors. While the

surrogate acts along a pathway of reiteration, this young woman acts as a survivor engaged in resistance who will carry away with her as a tool her incorporated knowledge of the past, which she can direct toward political resistance through her own choices and according to her desires (Connerton 1989, Nelson 1999, Taylor 2003). She narrates and lives the past in the present, so that the past does not exist as such across a temporal divide and so that the dead are not silenced (Azarian-Ceccato 2010, Yoneyama 1999). Although she may claim to speak for them, in the prosthetic relation, I understand that their voices are constructed through hers, to give hers strength, authority, and authenticity.

In both cases, the protestors bore witness within themselves in that they (re)experienced and recognized that which requires an accounting (Felman and Laub 1992). To bear witness is to testify about a past experience as a moral response or to provoke responsibility (Das 2007, Rentschler 2004, Zelizer 1998). Remembrance itself has been considered a means of bearing witness, but the protestors went further in using their bodies as "living tombstone[s]," marking the absence of the original while indexing and incorporating its memory (Felman and Laub 1992, Hirsch 2008, Nora 1989). "Plac[ing] the[ir] senses in time," they allowed their sensations to act as witnesses so that they simultaneously witnessed and bore witness in a "fully embodied performance" where the dead and living swapped "emotions, discourse and pains" in their "sensory and emotional force" (Seremetakis 1994:9,142).[27] One way this worked is through the mimetic quality of surrogation. Through "copy[ing] the world," they came

to “comprehend it in [their] bodies” and for Paul Stoller this transforms them into witnesses (Stoller 1995:41). Similarly, they can be described as “belated witnesses” who use imagination to perceive through participation what happened in others’ bodies in their own bodies (Felman and Laub 1992:108). This intimate relation with the dead or past produced an “urgent responsibility” that manifest in the protest’s bearing witness (Caruth 1996:102).The youth were at once “witnesses of genocide” and “contemporary witnesses of survival” and survivorship and testified of both simultaneously (Abbamontian 2008:185, also Azarian-Ceccato 2010). This means they acted as survivor witnesses, persons who lived through an injustice to testify of it, of both genocide and denial at once (Fassin and Rechtman 2008, Fassin 2009).

Two reasons exist for using their bodies this way. First, in testifying to themselves and witnessing ancestors’ wounds in their bodies, they indicate and affirm a perceived lack of witnesses in their target audiences (Nora 1989). Second, as survivor witnesses they relied upon their actual bodies to testify to their audiences in the hope of producing third-party witnesses who would verify and validate their survivorship. Didier Fassin describes third-party witnesses as those who can testify about what happened to another person based on first-hand (primarily visual) observation (Fassin and Rechtman 2008, Fassin 2009). He writes of this kind of witnessing as motivated by an emotional response to the person or people, frequently of compassion, shame, or indignation (Fassin 2009, Rentschler 2004). Bearing witness does not mean to simply be seen and an emotional response provoked in audiences. An “unstable emotion” does

not always motivate to action and can instead "wither" in the subject of a voyeur (Sontag 2003:101). Rather, the youth protestors aimed to bring the local public into the space of protest in an interactive space of witnessing. Different attention then was given to the distinct audiences. The message of Armenian American survivorship's authority and authenticity was intended for Armenia, and a message of survivorship of both genocide and denial was intended to provoke responsibility in Americans.

When the protestors sat on the sidewalk at the edge of the park with a metal chain draped over their laps, they aimed to create a "sentient and active space" in which members of the public could through visual and spatial practices "experientially know the definitiveness" of the protestors' attestations, that is, see "starving Armenians" (Abbamontian 2008:182, Schwenkel 2009:31). This did not work well with spatially removed observers, including Internet users. Drivers waiting, as I did, at the light, mothers pushing strollers toward the bus stop, a cook riding his bicycle to work, and all other passersby were interrupted in their daily routines by the protestors who had transformed public spaces into a specific political zone. The hunger strikers wandered through traffic so drivers had to be careful not to hit them. Honks of support caused drivers to look in their rearview mirrors to make sure the honks were not directed at them. People who may have frequently enjoyed lunch breaks or morning tai chi in the park were displaced that week or carried out their regular routines alongside the protestors. Walking down the sidewalk, one had to take care to step over and around the posters, bags, and sitting protestors. An Armenian flag was draped and waved over

the corner onto people passing there. The space of the protest was not contained to a city park but overflowed into regular spaces of transportation.

This space encouraged the public, specifically the Armenian American community and the representatives of the Armenian state in the Consulate, to become more than "detached spectators," to experience the space as constructed by and for the protest (Rentschler 2004:297). The young man described above referenced this goal when he used the phrase "so everyone knows" (Armenian Youth Federation 2009a). What he wanted people to know was not primarily the facts, names, dates, and images on the posters lined up on the sidewalk. He wanted them to know about his experience, his survivorship, his witnessing and bearing witness, the way he had been affected by a wound. He wanted them to get close enough to know "what we're going through" (Armenian Youth Federation 2009a). Fassin writes of this desire, "What counts is not that the facts be stated […] but [that] the trace it leaves in the psyche or the mark it makes" leaves a "telling" for others to see or witness (Fassin 2008:539). In the space of the everyday, protestors hoped the public audience would be led to question their positionality in relation to the hunger strikers. Through provocative public performances, viewers can come to recognize their own participation and roles in an "ongoing history of oppression," and ponder the ways they are implicated in historical narratives (Taylor 2003:211). This potential is "integral to creating a community of resistance" (Shepard, Bogad, and Duncombe 2008:9, also Levine 1990, Taylor 2004). Furthermore, in Lisa Yoneyama's view, this bearing witness reveals a dialectics of

memory, a “constant movement between memory constituted by the authenticity that derives from the witness’ capacity to tell what actually happened” and the “testimony” that “transforms what is remembered” into testimony that “compels audiences to envision” that the wounds of genocide “might have been averted” (Yoneyama 1999:134-135).

The most provocative element of the protest was the performance of being chained. There was not, in any moment I attended the protest, an explanation given for this particular experience. Because it was a prop that did not actually bind protestors together, cuff their hands, or restrict their physical movements in any way, it did not create a relation of either surrogation or prosthesis. It was a re-enactment and an analogy. Also, while hunger as starvation is widely used in individual and collective narratives of genocide, chains are infrequently mentioned.[28] Chains and hunger striking do not necessarily reference one another so it is important to ask why the protestors sat with a chain draped across their laps. First, it provided an image of restriction that reinforced and supported the images and discourse of silencing so prevalent in the struggle for justice. To show what binds can be a form of resistance to that binding. Second, chains are symbols of continuity and appear in phrases (*chains of memory*, *links in the chain of denial*) meant to propagate a linear temporality that would justify their survivorship in relation to remnants, direct products of destroyed past wholeness, yet that could at the same time reveal their creativity in using the experience of the past. As in the photographic and filmic images used in commemorative events, this chain makes

a clear statement: the youth understand themselves to be chained in the struggle for justice, chained to or by the past, chained to one another as survivors. Like for Liana and Gohar or viewers at the *Ravished Armenia* screening (in chapter 4), this experience was one that allowed individuals to scaffold their survivorship using different relational forms, but they did so while simultaneously constructing the collective through bearing witness to "outsiders."

A Tradition of Resistance

An activist told me about a conference she attended, where an audience member asked the youth present what motivated their activisms. One person said, "To be honest, we just like it" (comment to author, 2009-2010). Her own response was that "activism is sexy, dynamic, and cool" (comment to author, 2009-2010). A third quoted a proverb, "'A drop of water will pierce a rock.' That's what we're doing, piercing through stone" (comment to author, 2009-2010).[29] It is the third statement which best represents the traditional paradigm of Armenian American activism as a practice of resistance, although as the two other statements show, youth have multiple reasons for engaging activism. Even more than resistance conceived as disallowance or rejection, a "piercing through" is destructive and potentially shattering. In this section, I consider that in this motivation, Armenian American activist resistance is rooted in a "place of rage" which seeks to "erase your control over how I am represented" by controlling "my entry into representation" (comment to author, 2009-2010, Halberstam 1993:187,195, also hooks 1995, Krikorian 2013).

Rage in the stereotypically identified forms of aggression, fighting, abuse of and disregard for authority, and criminal behavior of Armenian American young men has been thoroughly commented upon by almost everyone but scholars. In a group interview, an Armenian American teacher exclaimed, “Why are the youth so angry today?!” (Interview, 2009-2010). A South American waiter at an Armenian café in Los Angeles told me he was surprised at the aggressive and dominant behaviors of Armenian American men customers (comment to author, 2009-2010). Marisa Sarian studied these behaviors in a group of high school students in Glendale and found them to correlate with low levels of investment in the educational system, government and activism, and Armenian American institutions, and she suggests these behaviors encompass forms of resistance to a system in which youth feel powerless (Haen and Weber 2009, Sarian 2012). Yet, I also identify anger, aggression, and defiance of authority in youth activist expression and behavior, which has traditionally been a masculine-dominated realm of Armenian American experience. Unlike those Sarian describes, activists are likely to graduate high school and avoid police records, but that does not mean they are not enraged in the sense that Judith Halberstam describes (Halberstam 1993, Sarian 2012). Although they did not act angrily or aggressively at the hunger strike, their protest can be understood as arising from a position of deep-seated rage at imperceptibility and denial, at the memory of violence upon their ancestors (Krikorian 2013, Miller and Miller 1993). Activists, possibly perceived as diasporan elites who sacrifice themselves for the good of the nation, channel their anger into a

traditional form of Armenian American resistance conceived as freedom fighting. In this context, rage is not understood as pathological but as constructive in its directionality toward injustice (hooks 1995). They claim woundedness in their bodies to point to oppression, suffering, or memory, and they also call upon a tradition of resistance both to genocide and denial to claim survivorship.

One of the first Armenian words I learned was ֆիդայի (fidayi, fedayee, or fedayi), freedom or resistance fighter. While the term was sometimes used to refer to those who defended themselves or participated in violence (in defense, for example) during World War I and genocide, it has also been used in reference to those who fight for recognition, justice, and survivorship more generally. The term has been used as a synonym for volunteer irregular fighter, national martyr, or individual who dedicated his life in service to the Armenian nation. Several young people bragged that their grandfathers were fedayees in the past and I heard the hunger strikers exulted as fedayees several times by adults who came to offer support. Armenian American leaders including academics and politicians have been described as fedayees by some, and, while writing this dissertation, a public lecture was prepared to posthumously commemorate a fedayee from California, Monte Melkonian, who was convicted of crimes of conspiracy and organized violence in France (Melkonian 2007). Despite his previous role in an Armenian terrorist organization, he has been recognized as a National Hero of the Republic of Armenia for service to the country in the early nineties.[30] It is also important to note that the AYF is the youth branch of the Armenian

Revolutionary Federation (ARF), a political party accused of raising large amounts of money to defend arrested Armenian terrorists in the 1980s, though they were often referred to not as terrorists but as heroes and fedayees (Dugan et. al. 2008).[31] For example, a professor at a southern California community college explains that "Armenian terrorists" can be viewed by some as "'patriots who have been waiting for 70 years'" (Aghanian 2007:107).

I never met any Armenian American person whom I believed capable of mass violence or terrorism, and I did not find that discourse of experiencing the past was necessarily or always directed in activism towards political resistance. Other forms of experiencing the past, such as the Armenian Youth Church Organization (AYCO) survivors' walks have encouraged self-reflection and spiritual growth. The goal, as stated by sponsoring ACYO, was to "provide a new perspective and deeper understanding of the suffering of genocide victims" (Arakelyan 2010). Youth participants walked miles in California's high desert in surrogating genocidal deportations. At a rest point, youth were encouraged to reject a vengeful mentality and develop a survivor's outlook of living well. This was to be contrasted with a victim's mentality of depression, rage, aggression, and so on (Panossian 2006). However, in activist discourse, I understood that living well as survivors involved the embrace of woundedness in practices of resistance. That is, to feel the wounds of the past and then direct rage at lack of perceptibility of that wound were the tasks of the survivor in living well. Situating

themselves in a lineage of patriots, the hunger strikers were defenders of the nation in a way that the AYCO walkers were not.

This is the understanding taken by Donald and Lorna Touryan Miller in their 1990s research on four Armenian American inmates convicted of terrorism against Turkish targets in the US. The Millers refer to the inmates, who were in their late teens or early twenties at the time of arrest, as prototypes whose experiences of and work on selfhood illuminate that of other Armenian Americans, like the hunger strikers, who they suggest think similarly but who hold "blander commitments" (Miller and Miller 1991:14). Neither they nor I make the claim that all Armenians think like terrorists, but rather the opposite (Dugan et. al. 2008). As prototypes, the inmates are said by the Millers to "embody characteristics that are present in less extreme form within many elements of the rest of the Armenian community" (Miller and Miller 1991:19).[32] Based on interviews at California prisons, they found that Armenian Americans whose resistance turned vengeful were likely to share these experiences: growing up feeling socially separated from mainstream Americans, the inability to disentangle one's sense of self and "personal wholeness" from that of the Armenian nation, and family relationships constructed around being descendants of genocide survivors (Miller and Miller 1991:22). One of the interviewees is reported as identifying his "mistake in life" as "actually trying to feel what my grandfather felt" (Miller and Miller 1991:20).[33] It was a "mistake" in that keeping the wound of the past alive and open motivated a desire for

revenge of the sort that led to violence and dissatisfaction (Minow 1998, Panossian 2006).

Revenge is "act[ion] with the intent […] to restore a balance" and the practice of "satisfy[ing] our desire" as "agents in bringing harm" to that which has harmed us (Govier 2002:3,84, also Haen and Weber 2009, Lang 1996). I do not understand revenge to be necessarily driven by hate or unproportional in response to a "moral wrong" (Minow 1998:10). Revenge is one vector of resistance in which survivorship is activated as agentive and directed at eliminating, more than managing or subverting threats (Milton and Svasek 2005). Yet not only a response to threats, resistance can also respond to the sense of an enduring woundedness or injustice that may be perceived as an affront and a real harm (Spinner-Halev 2007). Revenge is an extreme or escalated means of resistance in practice, although in conception, the two may be more closely related, and beliefs of resistance can index ideas about revenge by suggesting, "Why *not* revenge?" (Lang 1996, Panossian 2006). Revenge relies on fantasy, and in the position of fedayees, youth hunger strikers adopted a position of rage that "opened up" a "political space" for imagined acts of vengeance upon a political position of power perceived as harmful or threatening (Halberstam 1993:187, also Haen and Weber 2009, hooks 1995). Where rage is perceived to be silenced, fantasies of revenge often build (Haen and Weber 2009). In contrast to justice, which is often understood as legal, systematic, and abstract, revenge is a means of taking justice that lacks into one's own hands (or here, stomachs), as it is personal, morally problematic, and yet an "effective

way of being angry" (Govier 2002:5, also Cassese 1998, Halberstam 1993, Hinton 1998, Miller and Miller 1991). In this conceptualization, personal acts of revenge can include refusals to purchase products made in Turkey. I would like to consider that in the hunger strike youth might have consciously or unconsciously engaged a tradition of fedayee-toned resistance which as revenge conceived of their protest as directed toward harming a historical position and political figures and structures which uphold it. This perspective sees that rage seeks to attack denial and imperceptibility as the status quo which promotes a differential distribution of grievability and accountability (Butler 2004, hooks 1995).

Did any of the AYF youth acknowledge their actions or attitudes as vengeful? In interviews, a few youth expressed understanding of their own and others' resistance in the language of revenge. This means they used terminology including "payback," "take back," and "what is deserved" (Interviews, 2009-2010). Razmik Panossian links this discourse to a mentality of revenge related to the desire to "demand and protect what is your own" (Panossian 2006:238). Also, in discussing the concept of justice, some youth described righting a wrong, requiring punishment, and ending one-sided suffering, which I take as reference to restoring a balance or equalizing positions. Further, "revenge in these terms is useful for memory and identity" and a means of creating memory" (Lang 1996:16). Revenge relies on imagining or remembering a harm that occurred in the past, but memory, being shaped in present contexts, can become in this case a product of vengeful thinking or political resistance (Halbwachs 1992, Haen

and Weber 2009, Lang 1996). The discourse of fedayee-toned resistance strives to keep the past in the present in order to claim resistance and revenge as well as to "assist survivors in remaining loyal to the dead" (Haen and Weber 2009). In this way, discourse of revenge promotes an inhibition of mourning, keeping the past alive in surrogates' bodies for the purpose of denying the deniers and perpetrators of those wounds (Haen and Weber 2009).

Discourse of revenge or fedayee-toned activism, whose relationship is slippery, can also direct youth to ponder beneficial reframings of their anger, rage, or powerlessness (Haen and Weber 2009). As instructed in the AYCO walk, revenge as living well can be conceived as the "piercing through" of that which harms or threatens by denying the potential for injury (comment to author, 2009-2010, Kolnos 2005). This type of resistance can be understood in Lori Allen's description of "getting by," a blend of accommodation to the larger state and political structures while maintaining a rejection of those as able to determine the subject (Allen 2008). If in "getting by," the efficacy of threats are eliminated, harmed, and denied through the promotion of self-determination and self-representation, this can also be taken a form of revenge. While the hunger strike explicitly embraced woundedness, it existed in a larger, everyday context where living well involved a successful social or family life and where "excelling" despite perceived threats to memory and identity is conceived as resistance (Fordham 2008:242). It is a successful life as a survivor, and survivorship of Armenian distinction in diaspora, that allows youth to turn to the embrace of woundedness in order to defend

that survivorship, and beyond, strike out to shatter the political position which denies it (Anagnostou 2003). In the words of Carol Kidron, "if the dead and their lifeworlds are not culturally 'absenced'" in material and memorial sites of memory, "their absence need not be mourned, but, rather, their presence may be celebrated" (Kidron 2010:448). A certain satisfaction can be achieved by bringing the wounds of the past into the present, by using one's survivorship to do so, redirecting anger and rage towards what the AYCO calls a true mentality of the survivor. This satisfaction points to use of the phrase "continue to prosper" in the definition of survivorship the Unified Young Armenians offered (reference chapter 4). It attests that Armenian American youth experience an "active subjectivity" for which survivorship as "not only what remains," but as "living the most intensely" is considered to harm denialist ideology (Derrida in Fassin 2007:261-262).

Considering that Western Armenia as a homeland is often feminized as a Motherland, "Mother Armenia," it is of note that not only do Armenian American men carry names meaning revenge, lightning, martyr, resurrection, and warrior, but that some traditional lullabies are said to sing of children as those who will bring justice to their mothers. Maud Mandel suggests that rooted in the predominant memory of genocide from the perspective of women and children who lived through genocidal violence came a "desire to reproduce the family that had been lost" (Mandel 2003:89). Directed at the intent to destroy Armenian families, the reproduction of distinctly Armenian families restores a balance and harms that threat. Further, Anie Kalayjian and

Marian Weisberg suggest Armenian American parents have “often looked to the[ir] children as magical reincarnations of lost worlds” (Kalayjian and Weisberg 2002:268). Considering, too, that women are often presented in image and discourse as wounded (referenced in chapter 4), the notion of motherhood as a means to produce revenge both “celebrates” women as survivors “as it erases disturbing knowledge about women’s bodies” (Yoneyama 1999:197). While some genocide survivors and their descendants found in religion that “God was a parent figure that would always remain with them,” “a more typical pattern” of response, especially in younger generations of survivors, has traditionally included ambivalence and anger at God along with feeling “revengeful” (Miller and Miller 2004:137, also Yacoubian 2013). The pressure to carry forward the struggle for justice as fedayees while living successfully to bring one’s parents and ancestors this kind of revenge can weigh heavily on Armenian American youth, as will be discussed in chapter 6.

I always thought about this when stopping at the Vrej Pastry near my house hoping to find գաթա (gata/katah), an Armenian sweetbread. The man behind the counter would usually let me wait for a few minutes, encouraging me to spend time staring at the perfect rows of white, pink, and pistachio green cookies. “Do you have any gata?” I would ask, and he would smile and say “No,” as if I should know he sells dainty, tiny morsels of treats or extravagant peacocks of cakes. I just always hoped to find it on the one wooden shelf of various breads and rolls by the door, or maybe one in the back. So instead I would buy a box filled with polka dotted circles and squares that melted in

my mouth, and I would feel strangely guilty, not about the calories or sugar rush, but about my sweets of revenge – “Vrej” is translated as “revenge.” If conceived as “payback” to or “piercing” of the intent to destroy Armenian presence, naming one’s child “revenge” and selling sweets at Revenge Pastry can be understood as attempts to positively experience one’s position as a survivor and freedom fighter. Living well as resistance and revenge seeks to make “publicly visible” a “defeat” of those who have done harm (Minow 1998:12).

Chapter 6 | A Lack of Recognition: Denial and Omission

A Teacher's Perspective

Mr. Mattias and I sat at a square table near the Genocide Memorial Collection on the bottom floor of the library. It was around 4:30 pm and the building was crowded with students. They congregated near the magazine racks and in the computer room, earphones in and backpacks off. Not knowing what he looked like, I easily identified him by the large bags at his feet and the stack of papers he was grading. Mattias was an educator at a public high school and I had met several of his former students who said he was the only teacher they ever had who mentioned the Armenian genocide. I contacted Mattias via his website and was happy to find that he was interested in sharing his thoughts with me. He immediately struck me as an enthusiastic and straightforward person. He stood and shook my hand firmly with a big smile and when we sat down, he got right to business. While teenagers flirted in Armenian behind us, we talked about genocide curriculum, Armenian American activism, and "Americanization," the process of becoming and being American.

Having taught for a decade in public classrooms where Armenian American students were the majority, Mattias had certain and specific opinions about Armenian American youth. He praised the students he described as having assimilated properly, but he disparaged those whom he felt used and abused ethnic affiliation. He did not recognize a positive means of acting in both subjectivities simultaneously. To assimilate into civic American life and to melt in to the American nation was to him the

appropriate and healthy response of an immigrant or ethnic American. “You can be Hungarian or Armenian or whatever, but you are in America so be American,” he stated (Interview, 2009-2010). In his view, being American meant expressing that American subjectivity as primary and seeking to contribute, through career, politics, and lifestyle to the betterment of American society. He identified failure or resistance to assimilate as a problem manifest in two practices. First, he referenced students who expressed their identity as American Armenian, “not the other way around,” placing primary affiliation on being Armenian with American a descriptor (Interview, 2009-2010). Second, he explained, some youth use an Armenian identity, not out of sincerity or affection for the Armenian people, but rather in order to avoid American responsibility. He identified a contradiction in the efforts of youth to distinguish themselves from mainstream Americans through ethnic identity though they really “care less” about Armenian American politics, activism, or genocide recognition (Interview, 2009-2010).

Because the 2010 United States Census was approaching, and I had heard some Armenian American youth talk of “writing in ‘Armenian’” as a racial identity, I asked if he would be discussing any related issues in his government or history classes. “No,” he stated (Interview, 2009-2010). He was confident his students knew where he stood. For example, students knew that he discouraged them from missing school on April 24, the day of remembrance of the Armenian genocide. Knowing from experience that Armenian American students would nearly all be absent, he offered these words to them a few days ahead of schedule:

> "If you're going to stay home with your parents or attend a memorial service, great. But if you're going to go shopping or just watch TV, forget it. Your time would be better served by coming to school and improving yourself" [Interview, 2009-2010].

In this statement, Mr. Mattias told his students that American public education is more important than certain forms of remembrance, for who is to say if TV-watching would include documentaries on genocide, looking for news reportage of its commemoration, and so on. Even if it did not, who has the right to determine another person's activity as appropriately commemorative? Shopping, too could be a way to practice remembrance as survivors. Is it possible that "shopping for Dadik's (Grandma's) special dinner" participates in remembrance, for example? (Interview, 2009-2010). It is the case that sometimes what I view as a somber occasion is interpreted as a fun day, to express pride loudly in the streets that "We are still here," or to just be "free" (Interview, 2009-2010). According to one college student, April 24 has meant "partying" (Interview, 2009-2010). To others, it is "like celebrate Armenia day" (Interview, 2009-2010). In Mattias' view, remembrance of genocide and celebration of one's heritage and "intense living" of survivorship are mutually exclusive and are to be placed in a subordinate position to Americanization (Fassin 2007:261-262). In a position of power as a teacher, his clear expressions of this view must have affected his Armenian American students' self-work.

I was surprised he did not mention the heated public debate over the question of Armenian American assimilation that had raged in newspapers all year long. I

expected he would want to either identify with or against Scott Wright's position. I did not raise the topic as, unsure of his views, I took precaution to avoid being seen as an antagonist. Wright worked as an op-ed columnist for a local southern California media outlet and was a high school teacher who won a teaching award in his district. I am fairly certain he was a colleague of Mattias, perhaps working in the same department at the same school. In the contentious column, he described the Armenian Youth Federation (AYF) as "un-American" (anonymous op-ed, n.d.). He wrote about how he had been asked to provide a letter of recommendation for a college scholarship and when looking up online the organization to which the student was applying, the AYF, he was troubled to discover this sentence on the website:

> "The Armenian Youth Federation was founded in Boston in 1933, by General Karekin Njdeh, with the purpose of keeping the Armenian youth from assimilating" (Armenian Youth Federation, Western Region 1933-2013b).

Responses flooded public forums attacking Wright for being an ethnocentric nativist, a bad teacher, and hostile, to mention just a few. Armenian Americans wrote in describing a tradition of United States military service and community volunteer and charity work. One young man responded,

> "I am fully Armenian and I am also fully American. It is not 'un-American' to hold onto my heritage while participating as a patriot and citizen in American life" (Interview, 2009-2010).

While this quote is representative of the majority of youth activists I met in the course of this research, both Mattias and Wright seemed to disregard such a dual position. I asked Mattias, "Do Armenian American youth activists stand against

assimilation?" He explained that one contingent of them, yes, do fight against Americanization. These could be young people who are new to the United States, he suggested, or they could be highly assimilated Armenian Americans who have been exposed to nationalist and traditionalist rhetoric through Armenian American institutions. The second group he identified was a fair reference to the hunger strikers described in the previous chapter. While acknowledgement of this group might seem like Mattias did perceive youth who claim both Armenian and American identities, he explained that it was successful assimilation that provided and enabled the means for claiming a subordinate Armenian identity alongside a lesser degree of anti-assimilationist rhetoric. In his view, then, Americanization has allowed for certain kinds of ethnic affiliation which he perceived as valid only in that context. I agree with him to the extent that survivorship in diaspora enables activism and representation of woundedness, however I disagree that survivorship itself is made possible only by claiming a primary American subjectivity. He also suggested that third and fourth generation assimilated Americans from Armenian backgrounds may feel a need to prove affiliation with a heritage group to recent immigrants from Armenia.

Mattias was by no means a denialist. He taught about the Armenian genocide and sought means to teach it more fully in a manner that would prompt debate about ethics. He seemed to genuinely invest himself in his students' growth and took responsibility for fostering civic behavior. Yet he imagined the best future as one in which Armenian distinction would be omitted, forgotten, or faded next to one's

American belonging. To what degree is his perspective perceived as denial by Armenian Americans? This is the central question of this chapter. I show that denial is perceived to rest on omission, which can manifest in ambiguous and assimilationalist policies as well as social or institutional practices of forgetting. In this chapter, I focus on spaces of public education and national and state politics, those where denial is sensed intensely and where struggles for perceptibility of Armenian American distinction play out. Activism is often directed at policies that uphold, birth, and structure ambiguity and assimilation in these spaces because they are seen as threats to Armenian American survivorship.

Memories of Denial

At a basic level, to deny is to maintain the inaccuracy or untruth of a claim. It is to disagree, to withhold, or to refuse to recognize, and these rest on relational omission. Fassin claims that denial "is usually presented […] as being merely factual, but it is both prescriptive and polemic" (Fassin 2007:115). It symmetrically divides the world into "one side for truth" that is constituted as good and "one side for falsehood" that is constituted as evil and error (Fassin 2007:115). It is because of these uses of denial that denialism, an ideological position that espouses acts of denial repeatedly and automatically, is so easily embraced (Fassin 2007). Accused of denialism are commonly public figures who raise questions or have doubts about that which one group claims is absolutely true. From the other direction come accusations of radicalism and blind allegiance to a cause. This section describes various experiences of denial and denialism

along a scale, claiming that a symmetrical, polarized attention to denial plays a central role in Armenian American memory.

Personal denial can be identified when an individual is unable to face her own experiences or memories, as Kristina said of her mother. Kristina expressed some difficulty in her relationship with her mother shortly after the death of her paternal grandmother because Kristina's and her mother's memories did not correspond. Kristina experienced denial when her mother rejected Kristina's version of the past. Kristina remembered her grandmother, a genocide survivor, would sometimes cry "for no reason" and lock herself in the bathroom (Interview, 2009-2010). She told me that once, when she was maybe six years old, her grandmother had taken her to the farmers' market. She walked through the aisles of produce holding her grandmother's hand, and she helped her grandmother pick out nuts, green beans, and cucumbers. Suddenly, she said, her grandmother froze, dropping the bag of vegetables on the ground. Kristina remembered being scolded or yelled at by her grandmother to "quickly go," and described being pulled and yanked by the arm towards the bus stop (Interview, 2009-2010). Upon arriving home, Kristina ran in tears to her mother because she felt she had done something wrong to upset her grandmother. She recalled her mother was painting her nails and put a little on Kristina's nails too, ignoring her mother-in-law and Kristina's tension.

When I interviewed Kristina, she said her mother remembers none of this and will not discuss anything seemingly negative about the family. Kristina explained that

her mother is “in denial,” unable to face either her mother-in-law’s suffering, her own, or her daughter’s (Interview, 2009-2010). She was concerned at her mother’s chosen forgetfulness, but she was also angry that her mother rejected her version of the past as potentially valid and truthful. This shows how what is perceived as denial can also be understood as forgetting, perceived as a negation of the three women’s experiences (Sturken 1998). If the mother felt provoked by Kristina, her forgetfulness could be interpreted as a “defense mechanism,” where forgetting is a tactic of coping with “inner stress” (Smith 1995:12). In contrast to a passive inability to remember, forgetting can be active and intentional or completely unconscious in its production of expressed omission. Though those who are denied note an absence, they also find the displacement of one narrative by another (Irwin-Zarecka 1994, Trouillot 1995). For Kristina, and for the others discussed throughout this chapter, the noted omission should not exist (Irwin-Zarecka 1994).

Kristina was able to love and maintain a relationship with her mother despite this feeling of woundedness in regards to this memory, pointing to an Armenian American man’s statement that “Your family members are probably the ones who hurt you the deepest, but they also love you the best” (comment to author, 2009-2010). Maybe experiences of denial are seen as more egregious when familial affection is absent, across greater differences. Manushak described the experience of being accused of “false memories” and brainwashing by Armenian American institutions when she visited Turkey. That is, her memories were accused of having no experiential validity.

She went with her new husband and his parents to locate the villages of their ancestors. They were led by a tour guide to important sites in eastern Turkey, but they were hesitant about inquiring about Armenian sites or the past. The tour guide recognized them as Armenian because of their surname and eventually asked if they would like to see a monument about Armenians. They were happy he suggested this, but they were shocked when he took them to a memorial commemorating a massacre of Turkish people by Armenian revolutionaries. Manushak's memory from her trip parallels Araz Artinian's experiences traveling in eastern Turkey, and I often detected this notion among Armenian Americans that Turks wrongly claim Armenians are in denial (Artinian 2005). In Artinian's film, shot documentary-style on a Turkish tour, the guide repeatedly states that Armenian memory is partial and misinformed. He suggests his "own book" of history that the American tourists might read to counter their deception which produced their denial (Artinian 2005). This example points to how perception of denial from "the other side of history" can participate in a "Yes, but" tactic that is part of a "template of denial," in which victims are treated as perpetrators and the experience of survivors is "relativized" (Smith 1995:11, Yoneyama 1999).

These personal narratives are frequently used in Armenian American discourse to evidence public and political denialism and lead some to question their relationships with others. For example, one college student said, "No one wants to go back to Turkey. Why? So they can shove denial in your face?" (comment to author, 2009-2010). In that Turkish society has been frequently stereotyped in Armenian American discourse as

amnesiac, I was interested that this young man chose to speak of denial rather than forgetting (Connerton 2008). It could be that beyond noting the omission of Armenian memory in Turkish society, he imagined a reason for that omission rooted in an ideological position related to the desire to exterminate the other (Irwin-Zarecka 1994).

It has not been uncommon in U.S. news media to find the word *alleged* inserted into stories about the Armenian genocide. This is an act of denial for those who remind that "No one inserts the word 'alleged' before talking about the Holocaust or Rwanda" (Interview, 2009-2010, also Krikorian 2013). The word accuses claims of genocide as not having been proven or evidenced. Yet even when testifying publicly about their experiences of genocide, Armenian American survivors have been accused of being coached by Armenian American lobbies and political parties (Balakian 2003:381, also Miller and Miller 1993). That is, their expressed accounts of memory are labeled false or inaccurate. For some Armenian Americans, these experiences of denial carry forward the threat of genocide itself, the threat of annihilation where even memory is perceived as a presence to be destroyed. They repeat that "denial is the last stage of genocide" or a "symbolic repetition of the same factors that drove the perpetrators to kill," rooted in a rejection of the other (Alayarian 2008:30, also Balakian 2003, Smith 1995). Richard Hovanissian, for example, writes that memory is "targeted as the last victim" of genocide and that "complete annihilation of a people requires the banishment of recollection" as a second killing (Hovannisian 1999:202, also Smith 1995). These claims reference the idea that "Forgetting extermination is part of extermination" (Baudrillard

2010[1994]:49). In this framework, forgetting (as passive) is considered the result of the last stage of genocide, denial. To remember is to fight such.[34] The obligation to remember as resistance is behind the claim that "denial [is] as bad as genocide" (Meguerditchian 2012).

In public spaces and American institutions, denial in the form of ambiguity or assimilation are then taken as threats to Armenian American survivorship. When expression of memory is prohibited, people may identify denialism as obligatory or prescribed forgetting. David and Lori experienced restriction of memory's expression and called it denial that continues to banish a people's existence. At their apartment, I was served tea, peach nectar, and cookies on little glass trays by Lori. David sat in his armchair, while she moved back and forth from the kitchen to his side. They told me about their days of activism in college, a few years back. They had participated intensely in a number of activist and Armenian American groups, which is where they met one another, at a prestigious university. When he leaned forward to tell me about "the library thing," he sounded angry (Interview, 2009-2010). With his elbows on his knees, he said,

> "This kind of thing is what happens to Armenians in Turkey, but we are in California, where supposedly freedom of speech is protected, where supposedly everyone has equal right to his/her heritage" (Interview, 2009-2010).

One of the groups in which they were active had attempted to produce an exhibit on the Armenian genocide for a display case at the university's main library. The students' request was denied, however, according to David, solely on the basis of the

alleged nature of the topic. The students were told their display would be one-sided and potentially inflammatory. Rather than allow the exhibit to be shown as alleged, the expression of memory in this space was not permitted at all. David said several students had talked about protesting with signs and a demonstration on campus, but it had never occurred. He did gather signatures on a petition to be presented to the library but after he was treated rudely by an administrator, he abandoned it. David and Lori's experience is not rare. Frequently, officials, teachers, and politicians have asked Armenian American individuals to leave history to the historians, meaning that persons themselves should not fight the ban on their memory's expression but rather comply with official versions of history at their own expense. In spaces of American institutional power, they are asked or required to forget, and this can be taken as a denial of one's equal rights of participation or of one's identity. It furthers the sense of injustice that endures as harm (Spinner-Halev 2007).

Even Hollywood has not escaped this kind of denialism, obliged to omit via censorship. According to Jonathan Markovitz, the case of *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* serves as an example of a "1930's Turkish assault on American popular culture" (Markovitz 2006, also Hovannisian 1999, Smith 1995). Based on a novel written by an Austrian in 1933, the story tells of an Armenian village's defense against the Ottomans in 1915. When Metro Goldwyn Mayer, Incorporated (MGM), showed interest in adapting the book to a film, the Turkish Ambassador pressured the United States State Department to intervene, after which MGM dropped the project (Balakian 2003, Smith

1995). According to Edward Minassian, Washington took the matter "beyond censorship […] toward rendering judgment on a proposed film because of its diplomatic ramifications" (Minassian 1986-87). Although rumors continue in the 21st Century to circulate about the future production of the film under Sylvester Stallone, Mel Gibson, or Steven Spielberg, the story has never made it to the Hollywood big screen. What is more, in comparison to a body of Hollywood films about genocide including *The Killing Fields*, *Schindler's List*, *Hotel Rwanda*, and *Welcome to Sarajevo*, no mainstream American feature film about the Armenian genocide has, not despite efforts, premiered. For activist Armenian American youth, like David and Lori were, to allow memory's subordination to official policy in this way is to succumb to denial. It is to be coerced to participate in social forgetting, the public omission of collective memory's expression (Shaw 2005, 2007).

Because public remembrance, at school or in film, has been continually contested, memory of genocide has become intertwined with memory of denial. That is to say that experiences of commemorating genocide are often experienced as simultaneous acts of resistance to denial. On April 24, for example, commemorative events and protests occur simultaneously. I was surprised the first time I saw "Boycott Turkey" signs sticking up out of the grass at the annual commemoration at the Montebello Armenian Genocide Martyrs' Memorial. To me, they introduced a tone of resistance to an event in other respects somber, respectful, and quiet. Codes of conduct were usually provided ahead of time so attendees knew not to dress immodestly or

engage in loud behavior like playing booming music from one's car speakers. One year, the mayor of Los Angeles showed up to the service and gave a speech, not about memory of genocide but of his commitment to fight denial alongside the Los Angeles Armenian community. College campuses have allowed student organizations to set up displays for commemoration on or near April 24, at which Armenian student clubs or Greek organizations have often asked passersby to sign a petition for recognition. Of youth I asked to describe a typical April 24, few expressed activities of commemoration of the genocide, rather most referenced protesting denial on behalf of memory. One man referred to the commemorative event he attended as a conquest, since it was the first year that city had allowed a public commemoration at its City Hall (Interview, 2009-2010). In April 2012, a regular "commemorative march" through Hollywood and Little Armenia was organized by the Unified Young Armenians (UYA). The stated goals of the event were to "deman[d] recognition and overdue reparation for the Armenian Genocide" and the march was a call to governments to take action against denial (Unified Young Armenians 2012). Posters and chants including "Shame on Turkey" and "Fight to the end" were used as commemoration and protest at once. These examples demonstrate the interdependence and intertwined experiential nature of commemoration and of resistance linked to memory of denial.

An unintended consequence of this attention to denial is the production of memory subordinated to that attention. Rather than practice active remembrance, as in recalling and directing thought toward narratives and feelings about genocide, youth

often remembered in order to protest as a response to denial. Ironically, as Fassin suggests, it can become the polarized attention to denial that is needed to produce memory (Fassin 2007). For Marc Nichanian and Aida Alayarian, this is one way that denial rejects or obscures the loss of ability to mourn (Alayarian 2008, Eng and Kazanjian 2003, Kazanjian 2003, Nichanian 2009). That is to say that memory of denial produces another denial constituted in the lack of recognition of a loss, which is realized as a ban on mourning and grief. For Veena Das, to experience this double catastrophe of Nichanian's is akin to sensing "that one's access to context is lost," so that it is easier to focus on current, political moments of denial and threat than on attempted recovery of personal grief (Das 2007:9).[35] The focus on denial has become a kind of status quo and mourning is sometimes anticipated as that which can take place after the struggle for justice is won. This applies to Kristina's case, as she might find her mother unable to properly mourn her grandmother because of denial, as much as it applies to a collective mourning and denial. Nichanian writes,

> "Since the dead were not acknowledged as dead, since the massacres were denied as massacres, from the very beginning the people were prohibited from mourning. Not only were people murdered on a devastating scale, but also mournful representations of those murders were blocked, interdicted. If one of the central features of our humanity is our ability to mourn the loss of life, to give meaning to that loss through mourning, then the prohibition on mourning becomes even more catastrophic than the loss of life itself, since it goes beyond the extermination of individual lives to the extermination of our humanity." [Kazanjian 2003:3, also Alayarian 2008].

The Context of U.S. Ambiguity

Denialism and many experiences of denial are widely perceived to be entangled in policy, orienting the struggle for justice toward policy-makers from local academic institutions to the United States Congress. American denial is better understood as blatant political ambiguity that is constituted as denialism by conscious omission, legitimated and enacted through policy manifest at the local level. Such ambiguity is considered a kind of "interpretative" rather than "literal" denial (Alayarian 2008). The history of these omissions is comprised of both "deliberate choices and tacit acceptance" that are "implicated in international affairs" as well as local ones (Irwin-Zarecka 1994:122,130). In this section, I discuss two key political domains targeted by Armenian American activists to demonstrate the perception of American complicity in denial.

International Relations

The first of these can be referenced by my experience at a public lecture held at a library. As part of a regular series featuring academic lectures, the scholar's talk that evening addressed a triad of relations: Palestine-Israel, Iraq-United States, and Armenia-Turkey. The former referred to victims and the latter to imperial aggressors in the speaker's framework. The event was advertised to the public at large by the library and I was notified of it through an email sent to members of an Armenian American organization. Approximately 50 families or so attended, and the majority of the audience was Armenian American. Well-dressed teenagers sat obediently with their

families and elderly men roamed the back of the room with styrofoam cups of coffee. Papers and pens were out and ready. Most cameramen waited patiently by their tripods, advising passersby not to trip on the loose cables running up the aisle, but the one cameraman was as usual interviewing audience members and getting lots of different angles up front.

I was pleasantly surprised when Marina and Alex arrived and sat in the empty seats in front of me, and we chatted in the few minutes before the lecture. I assumed they were probably hesitant about coming. From what I had gathered from our few previous interactions, Alex was not exactly interested in hearing anything about Israel one way or the other. He had lived in Lebanon before moving to the United States and had shared memories of Israeli violence, racism, and destruction with me. When the South Lebanon home of our mutual friend's uncle was bombed in 2006, and he was killed, we both witnessed the anger and sadness experienced by the family. Comparing Israel to Turkey and the United States was certain to touch on a sensitive issue, understandably. Nevertheless, a thoughtful and passionate couple, they had come to listen, they said.

As was typically formal of these kinds of events, a local businessman and prominent community member introduced another such gentleman, who was to introduce the main speaker. The introductory speech surprised me. Talking about his religious background and experiences of spirituality, the man eloquently defended forgiveness. I had come to hear about Israeli violence and about similarities in

Palestinian and Armenian memories of displacement, not to be lectured about forgiving violence or to be coerced into ethical self-reflection. He spoke of the difficulties of understanding forgiveness, much less offering it, and I felt the air in the room tense, silent, and suffocating. Sniffles and the crinkling of mini-Kleenex packages being ripped open were all I could hear from the audience. I thought of one young man who did not think he could forgive perpetrators of violence against his ancestors, who told me, "Forgiveness is an ideal I would like to strive toward, but it is not practical or efficient at this time," meaning in this time of fighting denial (Interview, 2009-2010). Marina glanced at Alex and me. Her face was unreadable and fixed, but her eyes were large and open. The guest of honor had only been speaking for a few minutes when she grabbed her purse and left her seat without a word, nearly running to get out of the room. She did not return and Alex followed her a few minutes later. I noticed several other people also left from the event before the main speaker took the floor.

For some Armenian Americans, especially for those with memories in the Middle East region, memory of Ottoman violence to Armenians maps onto or can be linked to memory of Israeli violence, and denialism and the struggle for justice are identified across a Turkey-Israel-U.S. friendship. One youth activist wrote,

> "If you are an Armenian and sipping a *latte*[sic] at Starbucks, you are actively dismantling anything you've uttered about the Armenian Genocide and against the Turkish people […] The chairman of Starbucks is a Zionist and not only has close partnerships with Israel and the United States, but also propagates the genocide and colonization of the Palestinians. Purchasing Starbucks covertly funds the drones and bullets that kill women, men and children in Palestine (AND LEBANON)!" (blog post, 2009-2010).

He highlights reference to Lebanon at the end of this blog post to remind diasporan Armenians of their roots there, of Armenians who currently live there, and of the significance of Lebanon to the development of a diasporan Armenian identity. He positions Armenian Americans alongside Palestinians, as did the speaker at the library event, in opposition to Turkey, Zionism, and the U.S. government that deny past and present genocide. Pointing to Palestine, this activist calls upon his Armenian American survivorship to attack Turkey for its political support of Israel in order to suggest that Turkey, as not only a denier of genocide, continues a historical tradition of genocide.

Both Turkey and Israel have been described as "substantive" and "significant" allies to one another and to the United States (Larrabee and Lesser 2003:140, also Açar and Rüma 2007, Gordon 2010, Larrabee 2010, Mirzoyan 2010, Phillips 2005). More than allies, the three have been "strategic partners" who share military and economic interests and have acted together against recognition of the Armenian genocide (Phillips 2005:28). While Turkey has maintained a clear policy against the Armenian genocide, Israel has also been accused of denialist positions.[36] According to Yair Auron, Israel has taken a stance of "indifference" toward the Armenian genocide that parallels official U.S. ambiguity, relying on complacency about omissions (Auron 2003:104). U.S. Presidents have been accused of blocking Armenian American recognition efforts, but I do not know of any who has explicitly stated that what occurred was not genocide, especially prior to or after his presidential term. It is the lack of any official statement,

one way or the other, which has created ambiguity that sets the tone in mainstream media, textbooks, and local politics. That the United States has not passed Armenian genocide recognition legislation is sometimes blamed on the influence of these allies and their affiliated lobbies in Washington, D.C. This idea can participate in the perception of a hostile or threatening American context for some Armenians.[37] One student referenced the pledge of allegiance, "Liberty and justice for all? Ha!" (blog post, 2009-2010).

This is a frame into which details and key players are continually updated and rearranged. In 2009 and 2010, a series of events hinted at a changing political paradigm and I heard a few comments from Armenian Americans that the time of U.S. recognition was drawing closer. Unfortunately, the experience ended the way it usually has, with a clear and direct policy of ambiguity perceived as denial, in this case, literally omission from the schedule of items for debate on the House of Representatives floor. In March 2010, the House Foreign Affairs Committee passed by one vote House Resolution 252, an affirmation of the Armenian genocide which called for recognition of consequences of "the failure to realize a just resolution," (Schiff, et. al. 2010:11). This passing was taken as a threat to Turkey's policy against genocide recognition and therefore compromised the recent signing of the Turkey-Armenia Protocols which had been heavily endorsed by the United States (reference chapter 5). The Protocols asked for a joint historical commission to investigate the allegation of genocide. A similar House resolution had been approved in 2007 but was not brought to the House floor after the

Turkish Ambassador was recalled and Turkey threatened to cut U.S. access to an air base important to military operations in Iraq (Suny 2009).

It is significant that a member of the pro-Israel lobby, Congressman Howard Berman, was responsible for forcing a vote in the committee. He later called on Israel to recognize the genocide as well, and his leadership was acknowledged as a visible shift in Washington, where the pro-Israel lobby has consistently rejected Armenian genocide recognition legislation. Almost three months later, after Turkish and Israeli distancing from one another and the Mavi Marmara incident,[38] I heard comments from Armenian Americans that the pro-Israel lobby would now back the Armenian American lobby, and several people suggested that Israel might recognize the Armenian genocide just to anger Turkey. Although the triangular alliance may be more strained in the 21st century than in previous decades, it was nevertheless U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton who asked that H. Res. 252 be shelved before Berman pushed it to a vote. And although

> "during the 2008 presidential campaign, Barack Obama stated, 'The Armenian genocide is not an allegation, a personal opinion, or a point of view, but rather a widely documented fact supported by an overwhelming body of historical evidence' [and] called for the United States to recognize the genocide on twenty-one separate occasions,"

David Phillips explains that Obama did nothing to support this legislation (Phillips 2012:45). In fact, his response was one of utter ambiguity to the point that Turkey is said to have complained of receiving mixed messages (Phillips 2012:64).

An additional layer of ambiguity arises from the California-U.S. relationship. California has placed an Armenian American in its highest elected position, Governor

George Deukmejian (1983-1991), and has been described as a state that recognizes the Armenian genocide. Yearly days or weeks of remembrance have been declared and cities across the state have held commemorative services and acknowledgements on April 24. At one service in Pasadena, I saw a local community activist and hopeful City Council member awarded four certificates from various state officials, one from then Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. He received these accolades in thanks of his dedication to promoting the Armenian cause in California, and state officials reiterated their support toward recognition of the genocide via their recognition of him.

Ambiguity arises as California's position counters that of the federal government, by recognizing that which is to be omitted or forgotten. There are real consequences of this ambiguity in interpreting and applying the law, as evidenced by the 2009 decision against Armenian American survivors and their descendants. The U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals found that they did not have the right to sue for unpaid insurance claims held by Ottoman Armenians. The debate was whether reference to *Armenian genocide* contradicted federal policy and intruded upon the federal government's ability to engage foreign affairs (*Movsesian vs Versicherung AG*, 629 F.3d 901 [9th Cir. 2010], *Movsesian vs. Versicherung AG*, 578 F.3d 1052 [9th Cir. 2009]). With advocacy by the International Association of Genocide Scholars, then governor-elect Jerry Brown, Congressional Representative Adam Schiff, and a host of Armenian American organizations, the case was reheard. In what is described as a rare event, the same

panel of judges reversed its earlier decision in 2010, claiming that there is not a direct federal policy prohibiting states from use of the phrase *Armenian genocide*.

In international and national politics, denialism is identified as omission with an agenda. This has sometimes been experienced as a betrayal of the former U.S. position which sought to bring relief to Ottoman Armenians and which presented itself as a safe haven for refugees of genocide. Armenian American nationalist discourse may find in a perceived reversal a motive to maintain some degree of attachment to anti-assimilationist sentiment. That is, official ambiguity can participate in the production of Armenian American ambivalence about their place in the United States.

California Public Education

Because the federal government has subordinated itself to the states in educating citizens, it is also important that California, via Standard 10.5.5, requires its World History students to study "human rights violations and genocide, including the Ottoman government's actions against Armenian citizens" (Klingensmith 2000:44). Yet in public schools, ambiguity is nevertheless perceived through omission structured by three factors.

First, some teachers lack knowledge about Armenian American students and Armenia and therefore have been described by Armenian American public high school graduates and some educational colleagues as avoidant or unaware of omissions or silencings they support in classrooms. A teacher, for example, found that several of her teaching colleagues in the Los Angeles Unified School District did not know Armenia was

an independent country. School districts have been accused of lacking the "funding – and the political will" to adequately address student experiences and backgrounds per specific populations (Thomas 2008:2865). One student I spoke with, Andre, had immigrated from Russia and had been in the United States for five years. He told about me about the problems he had when studying World World II in high school. He said the lessons focused on Americans saving Jews from Nazis, and he found this partial and egocentric. He also found his teacher to be unknowledgeable of other perspectives. For example, Andre accused her of overemphasizing D-Day and the impact of the United States joining the war and of ignorance about Soviet entrance, Soviet struggles, and the Soviet contribution to the war. He brought in a tank he had purchased at a local hobby store in the mall, part of a popular military series. The tank represented the Sassuntsi Davit Tank Regiment, mostly composed of Armenian service members, that fought in Soviet armed forces, and it had Armenian script painted on its side. When he tried to explain that the Soviet Armenians had made a contribution to war efforts, he said his teacher did not know how to respond and became defensive. In turn, Andre became angry. To him, this was an experience of denial in that his teacher preferred to omit Armenians from her narrative and reject Andre's knowledge. While this experience should not be taken as representative of all teachers, curricula, or student perspectives, it is one example of an Armenian American student who felt marginalized, silenced, and delegitimized through omission.

Second, practices of standardized education can themselves promote ambiguity and ambivalence, as educators debate their meaning, significance, and implementation. Standards, a kind of extension of the common school movement of the mid-19th Century, are generally understood as intended to require and measure student achievement equally although this exists in tension with broader social hierarchical practices including racial and linguistic marginalization (Darling-Hammond 2007). They are the means of constructing a nation of citizens in a disciplinary, legal institution. In contrast to California, some states have taken neutral positions on the Armenian genocide in the production of public curricula. For example, some Armenian American youth were knowledgeable about a legal battle in Massachusetts (*Griswold vs. Driscoll*, 616 F.3d 53 [1st Cir. 2010]), in which three students with their parents, two teachers, and the Assembly of Turkish American Associations charged the Department of Education with violating the right of freedom of expression and catering to Armenian American lobbies. Massachusetts had originally included both "the genocide thesis" and "the contra-genocide thesis" in its standards but removed the "contra-genocide" perspective as a response to Armenian American protest. Reading in the news and learning at organizational meetings about this lawsuit, some Armenian American activist youth in California were alerted to look for omissions and restrictions about Armenia in school. Nevertheless, many graduated youth, including activists, whom I interviewed and spoke with did not know that California's standards included the Armenian genocide.

The standards-based movement has received criticism on a variety of fronts. For one, the standards have been accused of acting as a powerful tool of assimilation (Forbes 2000, Thomas 2008). This is not a new idea, as during the common school movement, "education was to be used as the chief instrument [in] creating a single American culture" amongst new Americans, ethnic minorities, and immigrants (Pulliam and Patton 1999: 112). School has long been the tool of nation-building, and Foucauldian approaches have consistently been utilized to demonstrate how educational systems produce students as a political and dominated population. Through a standardized means of instruction, "the world [is] metonymically available" for students to legitimately position themselves with pointed locations in specific national populations (Bennett 1994:66). A legitimated "order of things" and a place for student populations in relation to that order" is constructed (Bennett 1994:67). A system of rewards in conjunction with punishments puts students as individuals into competition and comparison with one another, that they will be able to view themselves as a people in the sense of "an average" and that they will be able to limit the difference that is abnormality in their training as normal, assimilated, and docile citizens (Foucault 1995:183). Students may be aware of and identify as unjust this process in which they are equally "accountable to the state" but the "state is not held accountable" equitably to them (Darling-Hammon 2007:255).

Multiculturalist claims of valuing difference and equality, which underlie pro-standards arguments and "reflect humanitarian goals," are often practiced as

"achieving" or producing a visible record of diversity that for students is "palpable" as "rote," "uncritical banal multiculturalism" (Kahn 2008:530, Thomas 2008:2864, also Darling-Hammond 2007). For Jack Forbes, such educational policy contributes to the "process of alienating large sectors of [American] youth" by mainstreaming curriculum, despite the value placed on education by students and their families (Forbes 2000:33, also Minow, et. al. 2008). In one study, multicultural instruction in practice involved entertainment at the expense of minority groups and non-English speakers, and outside the curriculum, race and ethnicity were not to be discussed except through euphemism (Castagno 2008). While "schools are a key site for the enactment of [racial and ethnic] tensions," differences that are important to student experiences are frequently ignored (Lustig 1997:574, also, Gilroy 2005, Gordon 2010, Minow, et. al. 2008, Roberts, et. al. 2008). As Mary Thomas' research among Armenian American and Latina youth at a Los Angeles high school demonstrates, students are aware of these perceived faults in the educational system. They see as lacking "class time to specific topics that are tailored to their school's unique population," "a critical or specific education," "or even a language with which to understand" and talk about "daily experiences" of heritage, ethnicity, and race (Thomas 2008:2, also Castagno 2008, Minow, et. al. 2008). According to the California Department of Education, there are no state-wide agencies that function to monitor the actions of local education agencies and schools when requesting or interpreting racial and ethnic data nor to study the psychosocial effects upon youth identity-making processes in relation to the teaching of state curricular standards

(personal communication, 2009-2010). Thomas accuses the state of a "banal commitment to multiculturalism" that fosters feelings of "wounded otherness" as competition between minority student groups (Thomas 2008:13, 11, also Gordon 2010, Minow, et. al. 2008, Sarian 2012). She writes,

> "The articulation of racialized identities and subjectivities for youth, and the way that youth come to understand, experience, and reproduce racial and ethnic difference themselves, I argue, is deeply informed by multicultural norms of celebratory diversity. But, since this multiculturalism is overwhelmingly one that is devoid of any analysis of racism and racist identification, the impact of multiculturalism on youth constricts their ability to deal"

with racism and racial-ethnic conflict (Thomas 2008:2866). In another study, high school students in Glendale expressed feelings of exclusion and identified a "lack of relevance" institutionally (Sarian 2012:9,28, also Gordon 2010).

This discussion is not meant to point to explicit attitudes of ethnic exceptionalism or entitlement, but rather to student expression of the unfulfilled promises of a standardized education to equally benefit them in a multicultural civic space, where recognition and value of student differences is expected to exist for all (Abu El-Haj 2006). Students sometimes buy into the American dream in a way that leads them to believe the promises of public education as positively multicultural and they, unlike many of their teachers, struggle to understand in what ways multiculturalism might still or should be alive (Gilroy 2005). The official inclusion of the Armenian genocide in the standards was not often linked, in policy and practice as expressed in youth narratives, to recognition or valuation of Armenian American youth subjectivity,

memory, and identity, but rather perhaps was understood to have been included in a particularly nationalist U.S. history which, as the previous section showed, in Armenian American nationalist discourse, is responsible for betraying the Armenian cause and contributing to feelings of national exclusion (Gilroy 2005). This is perceived as injustice within the framework of a "multicultural critique of education" that finds in order for "equity to be achieved, all students need to see themselves – their cultural stories, history, and values – reflected in the curriculum" (Abu El-Haj 2006:143). Not only do "students yearn for spaces and curricula that provide the context and history within which they can ground their experiences and analysis," but they also desire justice and recognition of their identities in the educational context meant to structure "equal distribution of […] respect" and opportunity (Roberts, et. al. 2008:350, Minows, et. al. 2008:10). According to Hava Gordon, youth are keenly aware of not only specific faults and critiques, but they also acutely sense "the ways in which their schools promote their development as politically passive and powerless" in relation to "depoliticized texts" (Gordon 2010:97,78).

Although California Standard 10.5.5 requires students to study the Armenian genocide, several factors might prevent its inclusion in classroom instruction and/or its relevance to real experiences of identity and subjectivity. I admit that I do not have enough data to fully discuss why the majority of Armenian American high school graduates I interviewed reported that their teachers did not teach about the Armenian genocide. Their statements contradicted the teachers who reported teaching it. For one,

students and teachers may, as one teacher pointed out, viewing what "teaching" is quite differently. For another, some teachers might not have time to cover this standard or might not find it important when choosing what material to emphasize toward standardized testing. The standard is a minor one that addresses the costs of total war, and it is meant to support the primary Standard 10.5 on World War I. In interviews, teachers said that it was practically impossible to cover all the standards well. Most said they had to omit or gloss over a number of topics in order to keep up with curriculum pacing plans and a few thought they would be able to teach the Armenian genocide better without the current standards. [39] Mattias, for example, said he would like to teach a thematic unit on genocide, covering various genocides, law, and history. The manner the standards have been ordered and paced, he suggested, prevent him from doing this.

The third and related factor that structures omission concerns textbooks, which typically present little, if any, information about Armenia and Armenians. Nicole Vartanian found in her research that one textbook used in Glendale included only one paragraph on the Armenian genocide (Hovanissian 2007). Having looked at another district's chosen text, I found three small references scattered in different chapters, two in relation to World War I and the other to European imperialism in the Middle East. Forbes suggests that these small inclusions are tokens as the bulk of text material continues to remain Anglo-American focused in a manner that excludes the histories and experiences of most students in California (Forbes 2000). This is significant in a state

where in 2010-2011, approximately three-fourths of the K-12 student population was identified as non-white not including Armenian American students (California Department of Education 2010). Teachers and students both reported these small textual inclusions to be inadequate for purposes of learning about the Armenian genocide and its significance. According to Vartanian, the main reason the books include anything about the Armenian genocide at all is because several states other than California also require teaching of this topic in their specific standards, and textbooks are typically published by national companies (Hovanissian 2007). On the one hand, these publishers attempt to market to the most populous states, including California, but, on the other, they aim to provide generalized material that is useful across the country. This has led to treatment of the Armenian genocide in most public school textbooks in a manner youth identified as lacking (Hovannisian 2007).[40]

In the context of public California schools, ambiguity is identified in teacher-student relationships, standardized education, and materials. This ambiguity was often perceived as denial by students who were knowledgeable about California's efforts to recognize the Armenian genocide as intertwined with recognition of survivorship, subjectivity, and identity. This raises questions about Americanization and assimilation for those who attempt to negotiate racial and ethnic identities in a multicultural space. Because assimilatory practices comprised a significant aspect of the genocidal process, it is important to understand how youth perceive these governmental structures in

relation to memory of forced assimilation to understand how they find a threat to Armenian survivorship in the U.S. context (Akçam 2012, Mandel 2003).

White Genocide

In one view, Armenian distinction and survivorship have been sacrificed, required omissions, in assimilatory processes (Fordham 2008, Okoomian 2002, Tehranian 2009). For Nazareth Markarian, "the Armenian Genocide is not over" not because of denialist attacks on memory but rather because of assimilation, which is the context for both denialism and the targeting of Armenian identity for destruction (Markarian 2008:171, also Artinian 2005). Yiorgio Anagnostou's work suggests that Armenian American distinction often comes at a cost, specifically of social and political capital, and Signithia Fordham's theorization of racial performance in assimilation suggests that Armenian Americans might experience a "psychological cost" to membership in whiteness that is in part experienced as anxiety (Fordham 2008:232, also Anagnostou 2003). The negotiation of Armenian and American subjectivities and identities can be difficult for youth who are sometimes forced to choose explicitly how they define themselves in relation to their families, friends, and political and institutional investments, navigating the intersection of intra-Armenian hierarchy with American racial hierarchies and the "heterogeneous social formations" that comprises classifications within them (Anagnostou 2003:282). If, as claimed in chapter 5, youth wish to live well as a form of resistance or revenge, they struggle to negotiate living well the Armenian American distinction and living well as successful in the United States

where, according to Fordham, whiteness is "the embodiment of what [United States] culture has historically defined as success" and "power" (Fordham 2008:234). Ironically, it is assimilation and success that provide the security and ability, calling forth the attention of the nation, to display distinction and survivorship despite the understanding by some that claiming a diasporan identity is to "refuse to assimilate" (Anagnostou 2003, Kotchikian 2013, Mandel 2003). They might identify the threat of negative "re-ethnicization," ever ready othering, as a looming threat of national expulsion or delegitimization (Anagnostou 2003:285). In this section, I discuss youth experiences that demonstrate this struggle and demonstrate how the struggle for memory is intertwined with a struggle for distinction.

Gayane, also known as Lily, grew up in a small, tourist-filled town on California's Central Coast with an Armenian American mother and a "white American" father who disliked the use of Armenian language or the presence of Armenian culture in the home (Interview, 2009-1010). After a divorce, Lily's mother felt free to live her Armenian heritage, and Lily began to identify as "half-Armenian" (Interview, 2009-2010). She learned more about her great-grandfather who had survived the genocide. Lily says she was often asked by people in high school about her ethnicity and she did not know of any other Armenian Americans in that town. Eventually, she grew tired of explaining what "being half-Armenian meant," but she felt it her duty to "educate" people so they would accept her (Interview, 2009-2010). She told me she always felt isolated at her school. As a high school senior, she created a PowerPoint presentation for a class in

which she explained where Armenia was and why her great-grandfather and their family had come to the United States. This kind of education is intentionally constructed as a direct response to perceived omission. It is as common to see young people respond to omission in this way in classrooms, like the high school student who wrote for a class project on immigration, “I am proud to be a descendant of survivors,” as much as it is to see resentment manifest as playing into omission and lack of understanding through the self-directed negative racializing, what Gordon terms cycnism (Gordon 2010).

On September 11, 2001, when New York’s Twin Towers were attacked, Lily was struck with fear. She had not hidden from anyone the fact that her Armenian mother had been born in and emigrated from Afghanistan. She was paralyzed with the thought that “they’re going to put me in a concentration camp” (Interview, 2009-2010). She even considered officially changing her first name to the English *Lily* when she says her family home was placed under surveillance by the U.S. government and she lost phone, internet, and postal services for two weeks. A few years later, a freshman at a large university across the country, Lily opened her dorm room one morning to find a note taped to her door: “Lily, we hate you because you are Armenian and Armenians deserve to die” (Interview 2009-2010). Sadly, this experience is not unique. In a Glendale high school, 48 percent of U.S.-born Armenian American males surveyed reported previous experiences of racial and ethnic discrimination (Sarian 2012).

Experiences like these prompted Lily to question the degree to which she considered herself American and what type of American. At one point, she wished to

blend in to the larger "melting pot of America" and simultaneously into racial whiteness in order to find a sense of safety, protection in invisibility (Interview, 2009-2010). At other times, she desired to stand out with a perceptibly distinct identification and heritage. It is important to note that a prime factor influencing Lily to perceive and distinguish herself as Armenian was a negative relationship with her father, from whom she wished to dissociate. Lily told me that for being the first of her mother's family born in the United States, she was teased and called "white" by her mother's relatives to an uncomfortable point because she did not easily consider herself white.

Lily's experience highlights the meanings of the phrase *white genocide*, which has often been used in Armenian American discourse as a synonym of assimilation into mainstream American society. It has been frequently used to chastise youth in a humorous tone and to remind youth that assimilation and American whiteness are threats to Armenian distinction. To act assimilated is not, however, equivalent to acting racially white, however that might be interpreted.[41] A history of legal whiteness in the United States (referenced in chapter 3) set up the conditions for this phrase to emerge, but *white genocide* also contrasts in color with the red blood spilled in genocidal violence, which is symbolized by the red in the Armenian flag. Whiteness also indicates destruction through fading, through omission, through lack of presence, and in this way can be synonymous with even colorblindness (Perry 2001). It has often been linked with lack of ability to speak Armenian, lack of participation in Armenian American organizations, and lack of marriage to another Armenian. These criteria counter quite

closely the factors that led courts to determine Armenians were white racially (reference chapter 3). To some, especially those more nationalist in attitude, whiteness is a denial of Armenian distinction interpreted as a consciously chosen position that is related to social forgetting and lessened valuation of remembrance. Lily's choice to call herself "half-Armenian" could be read as a way to situate herself within Armenian American discourse while simultaneously aligning herself with a non-white, off-white, or "other" label, marginal to both.

For Eric, it was not negative feelings of identification with or the desire to become invisible among "white Americans," but rather identification with non-white public figures that prompted him to develop a sense of self as Armenian American. The context, however, was quite American, his public school classrooms. Like Lily, he described feelings of isolation in high school. Arthur was raised in the San Fernando Valley, and his family traced roots to Armenia through Lebanon. He said he was acquaintances with a few Lebanese students and his closest friend he described as "a Japanese-Mexican guy" who played the drums in his band (Interview, 2009-2010). I do not know how Eric interpreted the meanings of these terms constructed perhaps at once as racial, ethnic, and national. It is fair to assume though that they were used to distinguish non-white identities. Other Armenian American students he encountered through school spoke mostly Armenian and most of their parents were from Armenia proper. In contrast, he spoke little Armenian. Eric's feeling of difference was noticeable. It seems to have bothered Eric that he could not be placed easily into any group on the

basis of combined race, ethnicity, and language. Generally, he associated with a non-white identity which participated in affinity between him and his best friend whom he perceived to share this experience.

He remembered one instance in tenth grade when he was reading out loud a selection picked by the teacher. It had just a few sentences about the Armenian genocide, within the larger reading, and Eric said he felt awkward reading it, as if he were chosen to read it because it was perceived to matter most to him or that he was treated as a token representative of Armenians for purposes of instruction. He did not particularly like the phrasing of the text and felt uncomfortable speaking them without adding his own opinion. He was hyperaware of the register he used and moderated it to be respectful of his teacher. In that moment, he described that he felt himself disempowered in an official way. When he spoke with his teacher about his feelings, he thought she gave excuses about the textbook and curriculum. He was told he could do a class project for extra credit if he wanted to research it further. This response upset Eric because she seemed to overlook or disregard recognition of his main problem.

I asked Eric what empowered him to later become a youth leader in the AYF. He explained that he had been inspired by the civil rights movements and key figures including Martin Luther King, Jr., and Cesar Chavez. He specifically described empathy with civil rights leaders as individuals who struggled against the denial of their rights as Americans. He saw himself, like them, to be Americans oppressed, silenced, or misperceived, and he allowed a sense of personal woundedness to interact with

memory of others' woundedness. He came to think of members of American minorities as survivors in a larger struggle for justice and this allowed him to situate his own survivorship in a U.S. context. For him, this identification offered a way to be American without succumbing to white genocide because it did not require the omission of woundedness. Like Liana (reference chapter 4), he saw himself as a person of color in this political domain. Both Lily and Eric "strategically" used labels of identity as racial labels ("half-Armenian," "person of color") despite perhaps taking them as "reductive" because it was seen as "necessary" in order to seek justice or make things "fair" in an American context where opportunities, rights, and recognition "have long been distributed along simple 'racial' lines" (Pollock 2004:31).

The stress of racial identities and omissions of woundedness is sometimes a particularly diasporan experience that others, including parents of youth, might not understand. To help students succeed in school as Americans, one group, the Committee for Armenian Students in Public Schools (CASPS) was created by Armenian American adults to educate, counsel, advocate, and mediate on behalf of Armenian American students. When I conducted an unstructured group interview with sixteen recent college graduates who all identified as Armenian American, those born in the United States reported the greatest stress related to subjectivity and identity. Those with close family relationships especially spoke of high stress, such as the woman who was living with both parents and two grandparents. The man who expressed the most stress and anxiety about his subjectivity was a youth leader in an Armenian American

political organization. None of the six who were born or lived in Armenia reported any stress at all relating to subjectivity. They seemed most confident, actually, which was a direct contrast to Ulrike Ziemer's findings in Krasnodar, Russia (Ziemer 2010, Ziemer 2009). Her research reminds that persons who experience language barriers in public spaces, unfamiliarity with basic practices of daily life in a new setting, or ethnic discrimination are likely also to experience significant stress in self-understanding. This perspective understands stress to result from distinction and difference during a process of assimilation. Yet, in the cases of Lily and Eric it was ambiguity around the degree and type of assimilation that led to stress as they attempted to distinguish themselves as Armenian American survivors. That is, in contrast to Armenian Russian youth in Krasnodar, here, discrimination is perceived as omission of and ambiguity towards difference. The interviews I conducted verify Marisa Sarian's research in which she claims that Armenian American high school students in Glendale reported ambivalence about their place in the United States. They specifically indicated ambivalence and even disagreement about the claim that government leaders and the United States population care about Armenians (Sarian 2012).[42] The discourse of white genocide is fed by experiences of public schools, museums, and media, and participates in encouraging youth to keep distinction perceptible as resistance, carrying forward hayababanum and survivorship as intertwined.

Conclusion

Forms of denial are the products of a system "plagued by a scourge of indecision and relativity" and one that tends to "displace blame, which is evidence of a lack of a moral foundation to guide our [social and political] decision-making processes," and lack of recognition of the Armenian genocide and Armenian American survivorship can be perceived as a manifestation of ambiguity (Sloop and Ono 1997:52). In its "lack of moral foundation," this ambiguity can be found unjust, especially in a context where promises of rights, multiculturalism, and recognition are given consistently, and where such promises can be understood as necessary for the production of social justice (Kahn 2008). Being obliged as members of a community who practice a discourse of justice in relation to memory and identity, activists may tend to judge those who are not "with them" as complicit in this system (Interview, 2009-2010, Sloop and Ono 1997). Denial is often not only "insulting," but also "actively undermin[es] what Armenians find crucial to their dignity" (Spinner-Halev 2007:585). In order to position themselves against ambiguity and denial, to clearly demarcate themselves from those who are complicit, youth activists have often turned to a historical anti-assimilationist tradition in Armenian American nationalist discourse, strategized American identities that are perceptibly distinct, and embraced remembering as a means of resistance. From such a social location, they protest policies seen as upholding a dominant status quo that is perceived as favoring the omission of recognition of both the genocide and their survivorship. In this context, writes Khachig Tölölyan, Armenian American identity

moves from “reproduction of the group’s identity” as a “normal matter of quotidian existence” to “a politicized cultural symbol” “against forces of extermination”(Tölölyan 2001). Similarly, Lorne Shirinian writes that to combat the “loss of identity” through assimilatory processes, “Armenians have developed a resounding response” that is described simply as surviving (Hovannisian 1999:171). While it may appear to some a conflicting condition that both rejects assimilationism and demands legal recognition, that uses living well as a platform to point to woundedness and to resist denial, this is the negotiated strategy of survivorship these authors reference (Mandel 2003). These contradictions represent “the more conventional” aspects of diasporan experience “in which ambivalence […] figure[s] significantly into the community’s self-identity” (Ossman 2007:82).

Chapter 7 | From "Never Forget" to "Never Again"

The main claim of this dissertation is that, in Armenian American youth activism and expression, survivorship is practiced as a means of both remembrance and resistance, and it is a significant means of practicing both personal Armenian American subjectivities as well as those political and communal identities. Survivorship, which rests on memory of woundedness, can be understood as a form of resistance in a context perceived as denialist. It is in a particularly U.S. context of denial that memory is produced as particularly Armenian American memory, and in which Armenians continue a tradition of claiming woundedness by the dominant society or governmental structures to define themselves as a community against the figure of the other as the oppressor. Similar to claims of discrimination in Glendale, those of denial repeatedly point at "official inaction," forgetting, and omission, so that to remember is to resist as well as to claim a political identity (O'Neill 1987). Within the "struggle for justice" to obtain political recognition of the Armenian genocide is the desire to gain recognition of a subjectivity. Youth activism in this framework is focused "not only on political action" but also on a personal transformation, on "being[,] reclaiming one's body and mind and reasserting one's humanity to undo" or harm a system of oppression (Gordon 2010:140, 56, also Schwenkel 2009). Further, demands for recognition are simultaneously demands for broader forms of public remembrance, if recognition is ever conceived as directed and secure practices of memory in visible public spaces (Irwin-Zarecka 1994).

From the paradigm of Holocaust representation and memory in the United States to feelings of exclusion in public schools, Armenian Americans have identified a "differential distribution of grievability" in which "lives" recognized as such are mourned when lost and in which voices recognized as such are mourned when silenced, but where racialized, unheard, or invisible others construed as anonymous objects or images, or as others who do not fully belong, are seen as something less than "lives" with voices that count, and their loss is somehow less grievable (Butler 2009:24). They point to a feeling of "enduring injustice" and question why "some injustices endure while others fade away" (Spinner-Halev 2007:579). Additionally, it is not only that "present disadvantages" are identified as originating in an unrecognized "oppression suffered in the past," but also the reverse, that a contemporary disadvantage, or sense of "historical wound," is perceived itself as specific lack of recognition of that past suffering (Chakrabarty 2007:77).

Survivorship was historically expressed in the institutional structure of the Los Angeles' diasporan community and is practiced in commemorative events and protests as younger generations claim survivorship through assuming woundedness. In this regard, Ernest Renan echoed throughout this dissertation:

> "where national memories are concerned, griefs are of more value than triumphs, for they impose duties, and require a common effort" (Renan 1990:11,19).

At events like the *Ravished Armenia* film screening and the Armenian Youth Federation (AYF) hunger strike, youth dwelled together in a shared experience of the

past in order to engage their survivorships individually and collectively, vulnerable to one another and accountable to one another in the construction of the nation. The paradigmatic, and traditionally institutionalized, forms of remembrance and resistance have structured practices of survivorship in an American context in a way that repeatedly calls upon successful survivors as those who express woundedness and Armenian American distinction. The production of survivorship in this way favors a homogenized national history that attempts to maintain exclusivity and borders (Schwenkel 2009). Ironically, in multicultural spaces of the United States, where a "vision of equality" may be idealized, a "theoretical end to [historic] animosities" between various segments of the U.S. population exists in tension with the desire to "retain ethnic culture" which may "spell the exact opposite" (Irwin-Zarecka 1994:62). Yet this dissertation has expounded on a "cultural formation" of woundedness and survivorship that is nevertheless "not permanent" (Chakrabarty 2007:78).

This dissertation does not suggest how various political relationships between Armenian American survivors and others might realign if the Armenian genocide were recognized. The refrain that exemplifies the traditional, political position, "never forget," might be perceived as threatened. If denialism were removed, in the words of one student, "What will they [the activists] do then?" (Interview, 2009-2010). If Turkey or the United States were to pass recognition legislation, would the AYF's attitude toward hayababanum or anti-assimilation be altered? As a comparative case, one can look to the memory of Native American genocide and the effect of legal recognition. Prior to

2009, when President Barack Obama signed the Native American Apology Resolution into law, references to Native American genocide and survivorship were present in academia and popular discourse. The same is true regarding the Armenian genocide. Conversations with Armenian Americans and others frequently pointed to the extreme displacement, death, and violence suffered by Native Americans in the historical creation of the United States, and some Armenian Americans expressed empathy and ideas of shared historical experience. Some Internet users in particular drew Armenian-Native American parallels not only to shift responsibility for recognizing the Armenian genocide away from Turkey but also to raise questions of restitution and recognition. For example, one commenter suggested that the Turkish government should let Armenians open casinos in Turkey. "It worked for the Indians," he wrote (The Associated Press 2010). It is unclear to me exactly what he meant by claiming that casinos "worked," especially in light of American Indian statements against the Act that apologizes on behalf of the United States "for many instances of violence, maltreatment, and neglect" and acknowledges past wrongs in order to bring "healing" (Brownback 2009). The Act was buried in large defense appropriation bill, exempts the United States governments from any current or future responsibility or restitution to Native American communities, and was not disseminated, translated, or publicized well. Will similar protest be heard by Armenian Americans in the future?

One reason that outspoken leaders and professionals in the Armenian American community challenge youth to understand Armenian American subjectivity and identity

in more complicated ways than that offered by the traditional paradigm is to prepare them to meet a version of the future that is not the one for which they are fighting. One woman exclaimed to a group of young people, “Remember, there is more to being Armenian than the genocide!” While some Armenian Americans might look to artistic expression in Armenian dance, music, and cuisine, and others turn to language, literature, or religion, many activists redirect their political position toward environmentalism in the Caucasus or global human rights campaigns. This dissertation, in focusing on a specific paradigm of remembrance, politics, and subjectivity, neglects to shed light on the activists who struggle for survivors everywhere, practicing memory and survivorship in solidarity, for a humanist-envisioned future of peace and tolerance. An increasingly accepted shift has been taking place from the paradigm of survivorship elaborated in this dissertation toward an alternative mode of survivorship built around alliance, collaboration, and intersubjectivity. In contrast to the fight to prevent forgetting as resistance, the emergent framework is oriented toward cosmopolitanism and humanitarianism around the cry “never again.” The discourse of this framework is not necessarily new but it is increasingly perceptible, public, and valid.

While in the former is identified a tendency toward isolation, anti-assimilationism, and cultural preservation, the latter emphasizes an openness to alterity and diversity of survivorships. Activism and expression in this framework is frequently considered the enactment of a “subversive narrative” with the potential to displace histories that “remain embedded in their respective nationalist master narratives”

(Altınay 2006, Suny et. al. 2011:11). It allows for unification with others at the expense, some would say, of intra-Armenian solidarity. It allows creative retellings of, apathy and disillusionment toward, the past and it attempts not to establish historical legitimacy, truth of memory, or evidence of genocide. Youth activists operating in this framework have been more likely to express the nature of memory as a "collection of reconstructed images" about which they are skeptical (Schwenkel 2006:22). They tend to be more critical about practices of vision. This attitude does not mean that youth are not nationalist, but rather some youth strategize their positions to their advantage, complicating the traditional paradigm through practices of reflexive nostalgia (Boym 2001). Neither does it mean that in extending survivorship outside boundaries of the nation youth act more morally. Rather, each paradigm engages a different kind of morality. In solidarity is required "the 'imaginative ability to see strange people as fellow sufferers'" and Armenian American survivors are challenged to reflect on their particular survivorship in juxtaposition to intersubjectivities (Caruth 1996:19). It moves away from a "moralized politics of good and evil" in which "singular agents must be made to pay for their sins," and it questions what kind of activism is "appropriate" in a world of "vital, crosscutting forces" (Bennett 2010:38). Below, I provide three examples of this positioning and experience of survivorship.

One man whose work represents the framework of "never again," who honors memory of the Armenian genocide while fighting to prevent violence in general, is a youth mentor called one of the coolest Armenian men around. He has encouraged

young Armenian Americans to see themselves as "part of a community that is more than just shaped by genocide" (public speech, 2009-2010). Instead of narrowing one's sights to Armenian experiences, the fight for justice should be directed against any and all genocides, especially those now in process. "I don't need to prove to people" he said that my grandparents suffered the deportation (blogpost, 2009-2010). I know it, he said. His understanding of a "struggle for justice" is one that takes shape as humanitarian and spiritual. When visiting Guatemala, he had moment of revelation when he recognized the phrase "our people" not as a reference to Armenians but to genocide survivors. "Genocide survivors are my brothers. Genocide survivors are 'my people'" (blogpost, 2009-2010). One of many events this man has supported was a rally against contemporary genocide. It was meant to acknowledge violence in Darfur and to raise awareness toward political action that would stop it. Armenian Americans who attended produced a video in which they share words of hope and encouragement with Sudanese refugees and survivors, and a priest delivered the video to a refugee camp in Africa. In it, Armenian Americans say,

> "I too am a survivor of genocide." "We pray for you every day." "My ancestors walked across the deserts of Syria and barely survived, but thanks to God they did. And you will too" (Beylerian and Zakary 2011).

In their statements, they stand in solidarity and see themselves connected in survivorship across cultural difference.

A second example comes from an AYF protest held in conjunction with a Kurdish American activist group. Armenian American activists have regularly chanted "What do

we want? Justice. When do we want it? Now!" but at this protest they demanded justice not for themselves but for Berivan, a Kurdish girl in Turkey. A minor, the girl said she was falsely accused and had been abused and mistreated in prison. She was arrested in the streets during a Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) demonstration in eastern Turkey. One Armenian American activist stood inside a mock jail cell, using her body to surrogate not her own Armenian ancestors but a Kurdish girl in Turkey. In front of the Turkish Consulate, Armenian and Kurdish Americans joined their protests, as survivors of Turkish oppression. One protestor said, "We are living in the present. We are looking [not to the past at our own ancestors but] toward the future of children and minorities in Turkey" (VOK Radio 2010). Another said, "We as Armenians especially know what can happen to minorities in Turkey. We want to prevent such a thing from happening to the Kurds" (VOK Radio 2010). Speaking quite generally about "such a thing" that "can happen," this man seemed not concerned with proving or even revisiting Armenian historiography of genocide (VOK Radio 2010).The word *genocide* was not even used in these statements. Rather, he oriented his survivorship, without justifying it, toward a larger human rights agenda. These examples do not reveal a practice of activism that is apolitical, but one that is less strictly nationalist and that draws on a different moral configuration.

The art of Sophia Gasparian serves as the third example. Her artist statement at an exhibit I attended read, "When your ancestors come from a land of genocide and oppression, you have no choice but to fight for your survival and contribute to securing

equal human rights worldwide" (Gasparian 2011). Her series of paintings was part of a show titled *Requiem for the Forgotten* which was part of a Day of the Dead exhibit. It is key to note that the majority of the paintings were joint projects, one created with Lydia Emily and another with Farzad Kohan, neither of whom identify as Armenian. In each are two children who look different in respect to gender and skin tone. In contrast to the other images discussed in this dissertation, they dream and remember behind closed eyes. This doesn't mean they're passive because they don't stare defiantly at power. Perhaps they refuse to acknowledge power and speak to it by meeting its eyes. Their hands are not chained or fists raised but are linked to one another. In *Hope Bombs*, their mouths are again covered. But here they are not silenced, hungry, or without voice. They appear to have allowed others to speak for and with them, others who filled their bellies with hope allowing them to dream of the day it will blow up. In *Jihad on Ignorance*, they remember a variety of oppressions in a reflection on silencing. In white stripes, perhaps reminiscent of the U.S. flag or lined paper for school work, they think:

> "Japanese don't talk about Hiroshima
> Native Americans don't talk about the Genocide
> Black people don't talk about slavery
> Jews, Slavs, Gypsies don't talk about pogroms
> Iran's gender homos don't talk about rights" [Gasparian and Kohan 2010].

The Armenian genocide is not mentioned, and Armenian Americans do speak about it. Yet the girl here is silenced. We know her to be Armenian American from other paintings, from the adornment on her head, and the Armenian flag over her mouth.

Gasparian explains her concern with silencing as partly one of free speech. Who gets to use the word *genocide*? Who gets to speak and remember atrocities? What does it mean to have memory recognized and inserted into textbooks? Who decides what *recognition* means? Do official histories silence Armenian voices? What other kinds of silences still exist around these histories? For her, these questions are not only concerns within a struggle for Armenian justice but within an American national memory with relevance for contemporary human rights concerns. Her questions are not aimed at obtaining recognition for past injustice but responsibility for present woundedness and contemporary survivorship.

In the words of Ayşe Gül Altınay, this kind of openness, collaboration, and explorative questioning has the potential to produce a "space of critique" in which can take place an interrogation of differentials of grievability and a "critical reconciliation" (Altınay 2006:126). It need not entail self-denial or work at the expense of an Armenian American subjectivity or identity, but it can participate in what Ulrike Ziemer describes as belonging to "more than one ethnic and cultural locality simultaneously," remembering a variety of "there's" with others (Ziemer 2009:414).

Figure 7.1 *Hope Bombs* by Sophia Gasparian and Lydia Emily and *Jihad on Ignorance* by Sophia Gasparian and Farzad Kohan. Avenue 50 Studio, Los Angeles. 2011. Photo by author.

Endnotes

[1] Public denigration of "Turkishness" is punishable under Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code, and although to my knowledge the law remains in effect, it has been revised since Dink's murder, changing "Turkishness" to "Turkish nation," for example (Açar and Rüma 2007, Netherlands Institute of Human Rights). Other intellectuals and writers have been prosecuted under Article 301 in the past, including Taner Akçam and Orhan Pamuk (Netherlands Institute of Human Rights).

[2] According to Maureen Freely, there may be "as many as two million Turks […] today who have at least one grandparent of Armenian extraction" (Freely 2008:ix).

[3] The insurance coverage is part of the U.S. Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (2010).

[4] I use the term memory in general to refer to historical memory, cultural memory, and personal memory which are intertwined. The first tends to refer to a tradition of historical consciousness while the second has tended to be used in studies of mass or material culture. Scholarship in this area has emphasized differences between memory as embodied, private, contested, or unofficial and history as archived, public, legitimate, and official, yet I understand that history and memory are "entangled" (Sturken 1997, Yoneyama 1999).

[5] The duduk is an Armenian woodwind instrument, somewhat similar in sound to an oboe.

[6] *Odar* was one of the first words I learned in Armenian language. It is sometimes used with intent to be derogatory term, indicating the lesser position of someone not fully or purely Armenian. It can in its negative connotation be interpreted as outsider or stranger. It also references what Paul Gilroy describes as "cultural insiderism," "an "absolute sense of ethnic difference" used to construct a homogeneous object of identity (Gilroy 1993:3). I use the word in this dissertation because it was commonly heard and used in Armenian American dialogue and I find it the most accurate representation of the concept of non-Armenian in the contexts I use it. I do not imply anything negative by the term but use it strictly to reference the concept of non-Armenian. I did not take offense when the term was directed at me during research, and several Armenian Americans joked with me about how I was not really an odar in their eyes or engaged in reflexive criticism by asking me how many times I had heard the word.

[7] According to legend and tradition, this is a means of divination or fortune-telling.

[8] The phrase can also be used in casual conversation translatable to "What's up (and not)?" or "What's going on (and not)?"

[9] There is a noted discrepancy between two sets of definitions. While one labels "ordinary citizens" guilty, the other places responsibility for their actions in the hands of an organized group, often a state.

[10] Before World War II, the classification of "refugee" "and the regimes designed to aid them had been defined by particular circumstances" (Feldman 2007:133). It has been claimed that humanitarian discourse about refugees had not been well developed during Armenian aid and relief efforts. Rather, some state that humanitarianism was born out of the response to Armenians and others at the end of World War I (Balakian 2003).

[11] This data is not completely representative. The numbers are likely skewed by those individuals who chose to participate in Kouyoumjian's research, and I have not accessed information on which individuals have been more likely to participate. In my research, I was explicitly concerned with youth who identified as Armenian American, and I found a bias toward birth in the United States. I did not collect data on birth or place of origin from the majority of individuals who participated so I am uncertain of the exact degree of this bias.

[12] While some individuals in the older generations of Armenian Americans can be considered "serial migrants" on the basis of having lived in three different countries over their lifetimes, this dissertation is explicitly concerned with younger generations where I did not find any serial migrants so defined. Susan Ossman contrasts transnational migrants, "someone moving from place to place with no fixed destination," with diasporans, those who maintain a community and memory of a homeland (Ossman 2007:81). The degree to which the United States or Los Angeles is considered a "third space" requires more research as I believe there is value in questioning the degree to which Los Angeles, or specifically Glendale, is conceived as a "receiving" and "sending" place of Armenian migration (Ossman 2004).

[13] The Armenian Apostolic practice is not the only denomination of Christianity embraced by Armenians. A diversity of religions and a variety of denominations or sects within each of those can be found in the Armenian American community, but the Apostolic Church has dominated in numbers and national significance.

[14] In other communities, certainly, institutions have also provided a centralizing function. Kate Cleary writes of the French-Canadian community, "the Church served as a main source of community, a spiritual necessity and a fixture in the lives of French-Canadians. On the next level, it served as a highly valued tradition that came to symbolize the French-Canadian way of life" which was meant to be preserved (Cleary). Hayababanum is similar to theories of survivance, about which Cleary expounds, in that it is a means of preserving Armenian distinction or survival often construed as resistance. Yet hayababanum and survivance have ideologically and historically different natures. Where, for example, survivance can be conceived as resistance through loyalty to inheritance which is reproduced in the context of a need to revive and reinvent a way of life perceived as lost, hayababanum has long been a significant way of being Armenian, not unique to post-genocide displacement and it was not a response of revival or revitalization in my view, but perhaps rather of protection.

[15] To describe the ARF as nationalist and hardline is to point to a Western diasporan tradition of ARF positionality and to neglect the recent role of the ARF in political processes in the Republic of Armenia (Panossian 2013).
[16] The use of the term *independent* was intended by several participants to communicate distance from political organizations. Although I first took the term as interchangeable with apolitical, I learned that to the contrary, *independent* often signals progressive, non-nationalist, liberal, and/or hipster-cool positions.
[17] There are, of course, also narratives that construct woundedness as victimhood as an enduring feature of the Armenian nation. Razmik Panossian identifies a "victim mentality" as a "major characteristic" of Armenian identity work which had emerged in Armenian consciousness as early as 300 AD (Panossian 2006:40). He justifies his claim in a historic approach to geopolitical Armenia. To study Anatolia and the Caucasus, one must look to a number of distinct histories and traditions: Rome, Byzantium, Russia, Persia, to list a few. For most of its past, Armenia was "subjugated to empires or at the very least had to pay tribute to them, but always as a distinct administrative-political unit" (Panossian 2006:41). In this kind of discourse, political agendas and cultural projects that rely on construction of the past as one of victimhood and survivorship produce the notion of a "singular" wounded community, overlooking at times the diversity of subject positions from which to know and experience victimhood in daily life as well as intended uses of woundedness for survivorship (Das, Kleinman, and Lock 1997).
[18] While there does at times appear a tendency to locate woundedness in femininity and survivorship in masculinity, this is not a subject I have studied. Women and men were both victimized by and survived genocide. Both fought in resistance movements. If women have been represented disproportionately as wounded in juxtaposition to masculine survivors then it could be fruitful to investigate the relations between this gendered representation and forgetfulness and the othering of a masculine enemy.
[19] I have heard that Hayk was Noah's son, grandson, or great-great-grandson. In the narrative, the specific relation is not of key significance, but rather that directly born from Noah's bloodline came the father of the Armenian people.
[20] Some refer to Armenia as a Motherland, and others prefer Fatherland. It seems a general trend exists in use of Motherland to lost Western Armenia and Fatherland to the Republic of Armenia, but more research needs to be carried out here. This distinction could map onto the conceptualization of feminine wounds and masculine survivorship.
[21] Ironically, this argument is similar to that used to gloss Ottoman multiculturalism and rights.
[22] As mentioned in the Introduction, the AYF in particular was a group difficult to access I believe because I was not perceived as Armenian American. I believe the young men passing out flyers saw me as an odar and therefore did not feel the need to provide me

information about their protest. This is typical behavior of AYF toward "outsiders." It also indicates that the educational aspects of the protest in its external directionality were oriented more at Armenian Americans than non-Armenian Americans. The youth in this interpretation were standard-bearers meant to motivate and reinvigorate the rest of the community.

[23] The son of Richard Hovannisian, respected Professor of History at the University of California, Los Angeles, Raffi Hovannisian was raised in California as the grandson of Armenian American genocide survivors. He studied law at prestigious US universities before immigrating to Armenia, where he established the Heritage Party and staged his own hunger strike against the Armenian government in downtown Yerevan. In March 2013, he received the second-most votes for President of Armenia by running a supposedly U.S.-style campaign. He has posited himself as both a good Armenian and a good Armenian American, uniting two camps of support behind his official challenge to the winning incumbent of the election based on claims of election fraud. Called the Barevolution, uniting the words *barev* (hello or greetings) and revolution, his movement unites the English-speaking diaspora with supporters in Armenia.

[24] In nationalist groups, odars are sometimes treated as suspicious persons if they attempt to participate in or learn about the group. This attitude is not representative of Armenian Americans generally, and warnings and jokes about it were offered me several times by Armenian Americans of other political persuasions. Distrust of others, to some degree even other Armenians, has been identified as a "major theme" in Armenian American expression (Kalayjian and Weisberg 2002:299).

[25] Words used to describe AYF youth activists in general included "ridiculous," "adorable," "crazy," and "misguided." Some also felt ambivalent about them, on the one hand appreciating their commitment to their political cause and to Armenian interests in whatever form, and on the other, feeling misrepresented by them as highly visible Armenians.

[26] I use the phrase deep survivorship similar to the use of deep memory, that "ongoing witnessing" of the normal contemporary in which the abnormal of then is kept alive (Kleinman and Kleinman 1994:717).

[27] For Diana Taylor, this witnessing brings together experiences of trauma and performance (Taylor 2003:205). I do not address the notion of trauma and traumatic memory in this dissertation, using rather the terminology of woundedness which is large enough to include trauma and to which Taylor's statement is applicable. The performance, in her view, can be the means, not only of producing memory, but also of reproducing or transmitting trauma, in its affective presence and the "nature of its 'repeats" as well as in the attempt to "resituate" and "permit history to arise where immediate understanding" lacks (Taylor 2003:167, Caruth 1996:11). Here, surrogation is the attempt to claim the "unclaimed experience" that constitutes trauma (Caruth 1996). In this view, the trauma that is reenacted in the hunger strike is also "the way that

miss[ed experience] constitutes the very survival" of Armenian American youth (Caruth 1996:100).

[28] For example, Henry Morgenthau's letter in June 1915 is reported to claim that some men were tied together with ropes and chains (Armenian National Institute 1998-2013). A website created to bring together descendants of Armenians who lived in an Ottoman Armenian village called Habousi mentions that deportees were chained (Compatriotic Union of Habousi 2011).

[29] I later discovered this saying is the catchphrase for an activist and development organization in Armenia.

[30] I do not reference terrorism lightly. According to Melkonian's brother, who wrote his biography, the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation listed him as a terrorist and he was involved with militia and terrorist groups in Lebanon as well as in assassination and terror activities in Europe (Melkonian 2007).

[31] Laura Dugan, et. al., quote Khachig Tölölyan, "The Armenian terrorist movement deeply miscalculated the kinds and amounts of violence and dissension which the Diaspora consensus could tolerate" (Dugan et. al. 2008:245).

[32] I do not intend that that the Millers' approach is the best way to understand the mentality of the hunger strikers. It is one interpretation. Turgut Kemel Tuncel reminds that mass experiences might not be well represented by focusing on extremists or on those who have access to political mouthpieces. Based on fieldwork in Armenia, Tuncel reports that the average person there is not well represented by leaders nor intelligentsia. He "heard more interesting views and ideas from ordinary people" (Gadarigian 2011). However, I would point out that the hunger strikers are "average" in some ways while accused of elitism by others. While they are not extreme in comparison to Monte Melkonian, for example, they are extreme to many mainstream Armenian Americans. So I place hunger striking at an intermediary position as one vector of action in the struggle for justice, situated between what the Millers and Tuncel describe as masses of the average person and what the Millers call nationalist terrorism.

[33] Most youth with whom I interacted in this research were further generationally distanced from the genocide, as great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren of survivors. Yet frequently, individuals referred to genocide survivors in their families as their "grandparents" (Interviews, comments to author, 2009-2010).

[34] Memory and forgetting exist, however, in a dialectical or complementary relationship. One does not exist without the other and every instance of memory is produced in a context of contemporary forgetting that continually reshapes remembrance. Forgetting can be experienced as inability to consciously recall information, as what is ignored by or ambiguous to selective memory, or as the result of repression or trauma, but it is essential to the construction of, especially a national, consciousness where a particular paradigm of memory is obligatory (Renan 1990). The forgettings that allow Armenian Americans to remember so particularly have been neglected in the study of Armenian

American politics of memory, subjectivity, and activism. Yet efforts to find that which has been forgotten have drawn attention to Hemshin Armenians in Turkey, for example.

[35] An area for future research may attend to the relation between this denial of inability to mourn and expressions of anger and aggression since young men have been frequently accused.

[36] For example, former Prime Minister Shimon Peres is recorded as stating, "We reject attempts to create a similarity between the Holocaust and the Armenian allegations. Nothing similar to the Holocaust occurred. It is a tragedy what the Armenians went through, but not a genocide" (Auron 2003:124).

[37] That the U.S. Congress continues to initiate legislation, however, can be perceived as a threat to Turkey's alliance which has been described as "the only reason" that the legislation is stopped before passing and simultaneously a means by which the United States leverages Armenian issue in negotiating with Turkey (Açar and Rüma 2007:450,454).

[38] On May 31, 2010, the Mavi Marmara was stopped by the Israeli navy for attempting to break the blockade of Gaza. The ship sailed from Turkey with various humanitarian workers and supplies of relief for Palestinians. The navy opened fire on the Mavi Marmara and nine people died. Turkey withdrew its diplomats from Israel in response.

[39] One teacher said the Armenian genocide is "easy to teach" because it fits in easily with the standards about World War I. Also, it should be noted that my research on this topic reflects mainly college-age youth who have been out of high school for one to six years. The last ten years, during the era of No Child Left Behind, has seen dramatic shifts in curricula and teaching. Research into 2012's high school graduates might yield varying conclusions.

[40] Other curricular materials have been provided to schools and teachers through organizations such as Facing History and Ourselves and The Genocide Education Project. However, these are not required texts and districts, schools, or teachers choose to use these materials largely at their own discretion, sometimes at the expense of the already overburdened teacher.

[41] More research could be done to investigate the relation between white genocide and Black American identities. As mentioned in chapter 3, rabiz can carry connotations of urban lifestyles and gangster imagery which play into racialized classifications in the United States. Some Armenian American youth have been accused by Armenian and other Americans of "acting black" and of being "bad Armenians" in association with African Americans. For this dissertation, I admit I neglected to study race and racism in this domain, but doing so would shed light on the perception of assimilation as a threat by clarifying the degree to which Armenian Americans consider racial identification with African Americans complicit in or a resistant response to white genocide.

[42] I refer to the average Likert scale rankings, of over one hundred Armenian American male high school students in Glendale, of 2.3 for survey statements that "The leaders in

government care about people like me" and "Most people in the US care about Armenians" (Sarian 2012:66). On the scale used, two meant "disagree" and three meant "agree" (Sarian 2012).

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