# Armenian-Americans

## From Being to Feeling Armenian

Anny Bakalian

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To the memory of Haigouhie and to her American
great-granddaughter Anoush
and
to all Armenian grandparents
who provide that chain of memory and love linking the ancestral past
to future generations

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# Acknowledgments

This book was written with two audiences in mind; social scientists concerned with race and ethnic relations and people of Armenian descent. Given my Armenian background and my sociological training, the motivation for researching and writing this volume might seem obvious. Yet, a number of fortuitous experiences led me to begin this investigation of Armenian-Americans. When I first came to New York City to pursue graduate work at Columbia University, I had not given ethnic studies much thought. Then, as I started attending functions hosted by the formally organized Armenian community and meeting people, I realized that ethnic identity and Armenianness in the United States were very different from what I was familiar with in the Middle East.

In May 1984, having finished my course work and comprehensives, I was searching for a dissertation topic when Loretta Nassar suggested I attend a conference on Armenian assimilation organized by NAASR (National Association of Armenian Studies and Research) in Cambridge, MA. In retrospect, that meeting was the catalyst that prompted this study. I found out that little had been written in the social sciences on contemporary Armenian-Americans, to the point where they had been labeled a "hidden minority." An empirical analysis was well overdue. It was an opportunity I could not miss. Not

only would a survey of people of Armenian descent in the United States satisfy my personal curiosity, it could provide much-needed scientific evidence to pull this largely overlooked ethnic group out of the academic closet. I also believed the results of the study would eventually benefit the Armenian-American community. The journey since has spanned several years and stages in my professional career. My debts are many and long-standing.

First, I would like to thank the members of my dissertation committee. It was my great fortune to meet Professor Viviana Zelizer during my first semester at Columbia. She has been a teacher, a role model, a mentor, and, to my delight, a friend. She was there for me when I needed advice, and when I decided to switch my research topic to ethnicity; she continued her advisory role even though it was not in her area of expertise. Her comments on earlier drafts were incisive; they helped shape the parameters of the argument and enhanced its creativity. Viviana has also been instrumental in getting my manuscript published. Somehow words do not seem adequate to express my affection and infinite gratitude.

I am much obliged to Professor Bernard Barber for having sponsored the dissertation. I could not have had a more supportive sponsor. He gave me the freedom to learn to become an independent thinker and writer. Professor Allen Barton suggested the use of a snowball sample, and was particularly helpful in the quantitative component of this study. He read through several drafts, and discussed with me the topic in question among others of more general interest. Those conversations were highly enjoyable.

I was honored that Professor Nina Garsoian agreed to participate in my doctoral defense. Her historical precision with dates and sources improved the quality of the final document. My intellectual debt to Professor Herbert Gans is clearly visible throughout my work, even in the title of this book. While taking one of his courses, I finally admitted to myself my interest in ethnicity and proceeded to read the literature for the first time. As a student, I found Professor Gans's criticisms of my academic performance well-deserved, though painful. He must have known what he was doing because it made me strive harder to meet his approval. I am deeply touched by his opinion of the end product. His compliment stands in a class by itself.

For this publication, the original manuscript was completely revised

to account for the rapid changes taking place in the Republic of Armenia and to include a discussion of all Armenian-Americans, not just those in metropolitan New York and New Jersey. In addition to interviews with California informants and visits to other communities, I have had to rely heavily on the previous works of my colleagues in this particular field. I have acknowledged each author in the text as I borrowed from his or her work, but I would like to single out Rouben Adalian, Claudia Der Martirosian, Vigen Guroian, Robert Mirak, Anahid Ordjanian, Susan Pattie, Harold Takooshian, and Khachig Tölölyan whose contributions were substantial.

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The late Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan also took an interest in my study. It was a humbling and encouraging experience to find such a remarkable individual who was still eager to learn something new. I will cherish his memory dearly. Louise Simone was generous in granting interviews and supplying mailing lists. Professor Irving Louis Horowitz reputed in the Armenian-American community as a friend of the Armenians, once again came through. I thank him for his courage in publishing this book. Esther Luckett at Transaction and Janet Schamehorn provided me with invaluable editorial assistance. At the College of Notre Dame of Maryland I found support for my scholarly endeavors especially from Sister Mary Ellen Dougherty and Sally Wall.

I owe much to my extended family. Without their help, in every sense of the word, I would have accomplished little. More specifically, I thank my Uncle Puzant and Aunt Shake for providing a home for me when I first came to New York; my Uncle Vasken for backing my goals without questioning them; my brother-in-law Hrant for keeping me up-to-date with the latest gossip on Armenia and the Armenians;

and my mother and sister for their love, understanding, and care, which typically for women, means feeding. I was particularly lucky, I ate haute cuisine.

Several institutions in metropolitan New York entrusted their mailing lists to me. Many people assisted with referrals, the pretests, and discussions. About thirty individuals on the East and West coasts became my informants for their local communities, sharing with me their expertise on things Armenian. I thank them all. Last but by no means least, my respondents, the 584 men and women who participated in the survey, deserve my deepest appreciation. They took time from no doubt busy schedules and demanding responsibilities to answer my long and detailed questionnaire. Their cooperation and enthusiasm for this study made the research personally and professionally rewarding. Without them all, I would have had no data and no book. *Shnorhagal yem!*

# 1

# Introduction: Assimilation and Identity

My parents met through the Armenian Presbyterian Church, which both their parents helped found, in West New York, NJ. They were very active in the church and Armenian activities while they were growing up. [Father was U.S.-born and mother was born in Turkey but immigrated when she was four years old.]

After they married, and my sister and I were born, they moved to Fair Lawn, NJ, and bought a home. We were the only Armenians in town, except for an elderly minister who would visit us occasionally. I was two years old and my sister was five. That is when our separation from the Armenian community began. We grew up as Americans with American friends. Our parents didn't speak Armenian at home, and we never learned the language. As our older relatives became lost to us, our ties to our Armenian roots became obscure. As a teenager, I went through a time of intense pride and interest in my Armenian heritage, but with the turmoil of the 1960's, that was replaced by other concerns. My sister and I have married non-Armenians, and our children are another generation removed from our roots. We teach them, with pride, the history of the Armenians while we encourage their progress in America. (Forty-two-year-old male respondent)

I am a third-generation American-Armenian, regrettably I know little about the Armenian background of my grandparents. My grandmother came to this country when she was only sixteen, so she was more American than Armenian.

> I enjoy my Armenian roots, go to Armenian events whenever I can and always feel a common bond with other Armenians. (Fifty-one-year-old female respondent)

This book describes Armenian-Americans, individually and collectively. The above comments from two survey respondents illustrate the main themes that dominate the discussion: the assimilation of people of Armenian descent in the United States of America and their continued pride and identity in their ethnic heritage.

Assimilation has been a contentious subject for Armenian-Americans. With promises of wealth, power and prestige, the host society is assumed to lure immigrants and their descendants away from their ancestral roots. While few immigrants have actively embraced cultural change, welcoming a fresh start in life, most have tried to maintain their heritage and recreate new communities in the New World. The success of such efforts remains under dispute. The issue has consumed Armenian-Americans ever since they first landed in America over one hundred years ago. Assimilation has been widely debated by scholars and the lay public to the point where it has been likened to an obsession.[1] It has also been called the "white massacre," a poignant analogy to a people who have historically suffered numerous massacres and a genocide.[2]

Armenian-Americans see themselves as descendants of a very ancient people who emerged in the mountainous region of northeastern Asia Minor some twenty-five hundred years ago and have survived, against all odds, a long and turbulent history. At the threshold of the twenty-first century however, the Armenian people and their unique material and nonmaterial culture are perceived to be in jeopardy for lack of an autonomous homeland, their dispersion in a diaspora, and their small size (approximately 6 million worldwide). Moreover, to many, it seems that their very physical survival is repeatedly threatened by massacres, earthquakes, and political turmoil around the world. To mention but a few examples from the most recent past; one is reminded of the well-established Armenian communities in Lebanon and Iran that have been destroyed or uprooted, and the Armenians in Sumgait and Baku who have been killed or expelled from their homes. The precarious existence of the Armenian people and culture fuels this debate with urgency and timeliness. Armenian-Americans are burdened with the insecurity of a

collective future, locally and globally. Not surprisingly, for Armenian-Americans, assimilation is a very sensitive topic that hovers, like a specter, in the forefront of their being.

On the one hand, there are some who have accepted assimilation as a foregone conclusion perceiving ethnic maintenance efforts as temporary palliatives. They have been too keen to notice the galloping erosion of the immigrant language and culture. This position is not new; even the earliest settlers were cognizant of the forces of assimilation. This is illustrated by an editorial that appeared in the Fresno (CA) Armenian paper, *Asbarez*, on July 7, 1911:

> The most important question confronting the Armenians of California, and in the United States in general, is that of remaining Armenian.
>
> The Americanization of Armenians is certain to come, all we can do is to delay the day. (Quoted in LaPiere 1930, 316-17)

On the other hand, there are those who have argued that Armenians are distinguished by unique historical and cultural features that make them resilient to the forces of assimilation.[3] Armenians take pride in their history, their persistence as a people for thousands of years, their unique language and alphabet, their national church, which has since its inception in the fourth century A.D. fused together the sacred and secular destinies of its people. The Genocide and its subsequent denial by Turkish governments remain at the forefront of Armenian collective consciousness, serving as a common denominator and strengthening the boundaries that carve up a separate sense of peoplehood.

Most recently, the survival efforts of the victims of the December 1988 earthquake in Soviet Armenia, and the resistance of the residents of mountainous Karabagh against the Azeries are taken as illustrations of the indomitable will of the Armenian people to endure and perpetuate their culture, much like the heroic courage of David in his stand against the giant Goliath. These sentiments are best portrayed by fellow Armenian-American author, William Saroyan (1984):

> I should like to see any power of the world destroy this race, this small tribe of unimportant people, whose wars have all been fought and lost, whose structures have crumbled, literature is unread, music is unheard, and prayers are no more answered. Go ahead, destroy Armenia. See if you can do it. Send them into the

> desert without bread or water. Burn their homes and churches. Then see if they will not laugh, sing and pray again. For when two of them meet anywhere in the world, see if they will not create a New Armenia.

Indeed, the proponents of this viewpoint observe that, contrary to predictions, the Armenian-American community has grown and prospered over the years and many Armenian-Americans have achieved prominence without denying their ancestral origins.

All this preoccupation with assimilation remains mostly rhetorical and speculative. Armenians in the United States are a little-studied group that have hitherto been called a "hidden minority" (Rollins 1981). Studies in the social sciences on Armenian-Americans have been few and far between; mostly descriptive accounts of traditional Armenian institutions.[4] This book aims to fill that gap. It provides a sociological analysis of Armenianness as it unfolds with the passage of time and generations in the United States. This entails an examination of the processes of assimilation and ethnic maintenance in personal expressions and an ethnographic description of Armenian-American communal structures.

The empirical data used in this volume is based primarily on the results of a large questionnaire survey that was mailed to men and women of Armenian descent in metropolitan New York and New Jersey in 1986. The main sample was chosen randomly from mailing lists of all Armenian churches and voluntary associations in the study area. It was supplemented with a snowball sample of individuals who were not organizationally affiliated. The survey yielded 584 respondents; hereafter referred to as sample, survey, or New York study. The qualitative data was derived from in-depth interviews with informants actively involved in Armenian-American communities, both on the East and West coasts; participant observation of the New York/New Jersey community; and published material. Vignettes and anecdotal evidence gathered from these sources are used to buttress and humanize the quantitative evidence. Methods of data collection and a description of the sample are explained in greater detail at the end of this chapter.

Milton Gordon's (1964) conceptual framework on assimilation was used to collect and analyze the data on Armenian-Americans. He postulated that there are seven subprocesses of assimilation (explained fully below), and that immigrant groups proceed at a variable pace

along each of these continua. The underlying assumption of this study is the "straight-line" model (Sandberg 1974), which predicts a decrease in adherence to ethnic culture and behavioral forms with length of history in the United States. Nonetheless, assimilation is understood as a dynamic process that may be reversed, at least in theory. The aim here is not to measure how Armenian-Americans have become similar to other ethnic groups or mainstream Americans, but to measure their departures from traditional Armenian value systems, behavioral forms, and life-styles.

The results of this survey establish that generational presence in the United States is the most powerful variable in explaining assimilation. The immigrant generation's cultural and behavioral patterns are taken as the statistical baseline, and all departures from that imply a movement along the continuum toward more assimilation. Therefore, change is measured in the degree difference between the first and subsequent generations. The foreign-born or immigrant generation is defined as the first generation. The second generation consists of the U.S.-born children of the immigrants. The third generation are men and women who with one or both parents are U.S.-born. And the fourth generation are those who with their parents and at least one grandparent are also U.S.-born.

The observations presented here are believed to be representative of Armenian-Americans. This term encompasses a wide spectrum of people. The universe of Armenian-Americans consists of men and women who reside in the United States and trace descent from the ancient land and culture of Armenia. This is a subjective definition based on identity; it inevitably produces wide within-group variations by generational presence in America, recency of immigration, legal status, country of birth, religious affiliation, mixed parentage, socioeconomic status, knowledge of Armenian language and culture, political/ideological beliefs, degree of involvement in ethnic communal activities, and so on.

This study demonstrates that American-born descendants of Armenian immigrants have undergone significant assimilation in the United States. For example, the Armenian language is no longer used as a means of everyday communication. The secular culture, even cuisine, is relegated to special occasions and acquires symbolic connotations. Frequency of attendance at Armenian religious services

is gradually reduced, as is participation in communal life and activities sponsored by Armenian voluntary associations. Social ties, even intimate relations and conjugal bonds, with non-Armenians become increasingly the norm. But this is only part of the story. The majority of Armenian-Americans, even the great-grandchildren of the immigrant generation, continue to maintain high levels of Armenian identity, fierce pride in their ancestral heritage, and a strong sense of we-ness or peoplehood.

What might seem as two contradictory processes, a zero-sum pie, do indeed coexist. I propose here that processes of assimilation and maintenance of ethnic identity go hand in hand. This is possible because Armenianness changes in its form and function. Later-generation Armenian-Americans are best described by the concept of "symbolic ethnicity" (Gans 1979). Symbolic Armenianness is voluntary, rational, and situational, in contrast to the traditional Armenianness of the immigrant generation, which is ascribed, unconscious, and compulsive. Symbolic Armenians acknowledge and are proud of their ethnic origin. Symbolic Armenianness pertains to the realm of emotions but makes few behavioral demands. The generational change is from "being" Armenian to "feeling" Armenian.

Human action is assumed to be purposeful, creative. People use the little margins of freedom and limited choices they have to play an active part in structuring their social world. Assimilation and ethnic maintenance do not just "happen" to immigrant groups. Immigrants are not passive victims in the drama that forces them to make choices between their cultural survival and their mundane, existential survival. Armenians, like most immigrant groups in America, have established churches, schools, mass media, and myriad other organizations to enact their cultural heritage in a new land, under new conditions, as they have tried to pass their ancestral legacy onto subsequent generations. It should be noted, however, that the emergent structures are rarely exact replicas of the ones left behind in the "old country" or countries, as the case may be. The Armenian-American subculture is a creative adaptation to a new and different life. Likewise, assimilation and the changing nature of Armenianness are not acts of callous betrayal, but innovative responses to changing structural conditions and personal needs.

The ethnicity of later-generation Armenian-Americans is different in nature and degree from that of the immigrant generation. Ethnic

identity for American-born generations is not at the core of their role expectations and self-image. American-born upper-middle-class symbolic Armenians have more freedom in deciding their personal identities. They may choose to be Armenian, Armenian-American, American-Armenian, American, or whatever else they want. Moreover, symbolic Armenians may change their identity as often as they want. Identities may fluctuate over the course of one's life, when facing specific audiences, and in response to changes in the larger environment or the diaspora.

For Armenian-Americans, the boundaries separating Armenians from non-Armenians, "us" from "them," are generally self-imposed, shallow, and mutable. By contrast, the identity of Armenians who lived in the Ottoman Empire, as those of the Middle East today, was ascribed by the social and political system they were born into. That is, the markers that separated Armenians from non-Armenians were imposed by forces outside the Armenian collectivity. It should be noted that an ascribed identity is far more likely to determine the life-styles and life chances of a group member than a voluntary identity. In sum, the varying versions of Armenianness should be recognized as the outcomes of complex historical and dialectical processes. Country of birth and childhood socialization, generation, and even cohort effect are important variables in understanding the behavior and attitudes of people of Armenian descent.

The study emphasizes the sentimental component of symbolic Armenianness, making a case for increased situational, individualistic forms of expression and the importance of convenience in its application. Most frequently, Armenianness is manifested during one's leisure time. Armenian identity for later generations is no longer exclusive, all-engulfing, but tangential to people's lives and daily preoccupations. Consequently, its liability is also limited, making it easier to be a symbolic Armenian.

It is generally hypothesized that the higher the social class, the less the ethnic identity and commitment. I find that Armenian-Americans with higher educational attainment in the sample are more likely to be structurally assimilated; that is, they are more likely to have non-Armenian friends and spouses. However, structural assimilation does not significantly alter their levels of Armenian identity. With continued assimilation and upward mobility, if Armenianness is to

survive in the United States among large proportions of men and women of Armenian descent, it can only do so in its symbolic form.

It should not be forgotten that the popularity and renewed interest in ethnicity in recent decades coincides with its increased societal legitimation and the improved socioeconomic status of most white ethnic groups including the Armenians. With higher levels of education, occupational prestige, and income, later-generation Armenian-Americans are less ashamed to be vocal about their immigrant roots. Ethnicity is less embarrassing today than it was during the first half of the twentieth century precisely because it is only sentimental, romanticized ethnicity. The results of this study clearly show that there is no "return" or "revival" to behavioral forms of Armenianness.

The argument that ethnic resilience is caused by instrumental motives or material "interests" is somewhat limited in its application here. Overall, Armenian-Americans are characterized by middle-class to upper-middle-class status, and their social mobility as a group has been remarkably rapid. They have few social and economic reasons to mobilize as a group in the urban political arena. This is not to say that Armenian-Americans have not jumped on the bandwagon alongside other ethnic and racial groups competing for their share of the American pie. In Los Angeles, for example, Armenian brokers compete for public monies targeted to finance social services for Armenian refugees. Elsewhere Armenians contribute dollars, and votes whenever possible, to elect people of Armenian descent to public office. More recently, Armenian organizations have received federal funds for earthquake relief. There is somewhat more support for the ideological component of ethnic resilience because Armenianness is sustained by a myth of a common ancestor, a shared history, and a sense of peoplehood with Armenians around the world. This ideology stirs the hearts and minds of Armenian-Americans to express their roots, make token contributions to Armenian philanthropies, write letters to newspapers or politicians regarding the denial of the Genocide, and so on. The most active forms of mobilization, such as rallies, public demonstrations, whatever the motivation, are confined primarily to the first and second generations.

A small core of highly active men and women, overwhelmingly from the first and second generations, make up the "Armenian-

American Community" and constitute the audience for the numerous events and activities hosted by the voluntary associations. The large influx of new Armenian immigrants in recent decades has revitalized the communal structures and provided a cadre to man the churches, the schools, the old people's homes, the media, and the various organizations. This community is unable to attract the attention, let alone retain the participation, of the vast majority of people of Armenian descent.

It is impossible for American-born Armenians to find Armenianness meaningful or functional if they are not taught how to appreciate it. The dilemma in ethnic continuity has always been the conciliation of the American Dream with ethnic ideology. Only the most convenient modes of socialization and manifestations of ethnicity are acceptable and feasible. They are the most symbolic: those that do not hinder personal achievements and do not get into conflict with mainstream American society. The concern here is not whether Armenian institutional structures and a community of sorts will survive. There is no doubt that there will be in the foreseeable future some men and women of Armenian stock who will find it expedient to maintain some form of Armenianness, and as long as the larger American society tolerates it, they will individually and communally try to do so. The real issue is what proportion of the universe of men and women of Armenian descent will do so.

## Immigration and Settlement

Mirak (1980; 1983), who has written the most comprehensive social history of early Armenian-Americans to date, observes that very few pioneering Armenians came to America before 1890. The earliest recorded immigrant is one "Malcolm the Armenian" who came to Jamestown in 1618 or 1619. Before 1870, perhaps 60 adventurous businessmen who had been schooled by New England Protestant missionaries arrived from Asia Minor. By the late 1880s the number of Armenians is estimated to have risen to 1,500. These were mainly artisans and laborers seeking economic opportunities. Then, in the last decade of the nineteenth century, over 12,000 frightened Armenians, fleeing the massacres and political unrest of the decaying Ottoman

Empire, took refuge on American soil. The annual immigration figures peaked to 2,500 by the mid-1890s.

The pace of immigration accelerated dramatically between 1900 and 1914. By World War I, there were some 60,000 Armenians in the United States. For example, in 1910 more than 5,500 Armenians entered the United States, and in 1913, the records indicate that another 9,355 arrived. Both push and pull factors contributed to this increase. On the one hand, political and economic conditions were rapidly deteriorating in Ottoman Turkey. The most significant incident during this period was the Adana massacres in 1909 that killed between 15,000 and 20,000 souls. On the other hand, the presence of relatives and friends in the New World triggered the migration chain and eased the process.

The prewar immigrants were predominantly from Asia Minor. They arrived in New York and settled in eastern cities. A much smaller number of Russian-Armenians, about 2,500, came between 1898 and 1914. They initially settled in Canada and then moved to southern California after 1908. Mirak (1980) suggests that economic and political conditions in Russian Armenia, while serious, were not as oppressive as those in the Ottoman Empire, nor did they have the benefit of Protestant missionaries to lure them to emigrate.

After World War I, emigration resumed. Survivors from the Armenian Genocide (1915) and the deportations perpetrated by the Young Turk Government continued to come to America in comparatively large numbers until the quota system went into effect in 1924. For example in 1920 alone, 10,212 Armenians, a record number, entered the United States. Again, between 1920 and 1924 an additional 20,559 came. Unlike prewar Armenian immigrants, over half of these were women and a fifth were children; many were widows and orphans who had been maimed and psychologically scarred by the atrocities they had experienced. A few had been rescued from Turkish homes, many came from orphanages and refugee camps run by Armenian charitable associations or European and American missionaries in Syria, Greece, and Egypt.

The quota system, which admitted immigration from various nations by the proportion of their countrymen in the 1870 U.S. census, obviously did not favor Armenians and brought their immigration to a halt. Nonetheless, during the period when the quota law was in effect,

1924-1965, some Armenians were able to bypass the restrictive barriers to immigration. Initially, several Armenians entered with so-called Nansen passports; refugee documents supplied by the League of Nations. Then, ANCHA (American National Committee for Homeless Armenians), established in 1947, was instrumental in relocating about 4,500 Armenians, mainly from the Soviet Union, who had been stranded in settlement camps in Germany and Italy after World War II. These were exempted from the nationality quota by the Displaced Persons Act. ANCHA later helped Armenians from Palestine after the creation of the State of Israel, those fleeing communist regimes in Romania and Bulgaria and those escaping the socialist Arab governments of Egypt, Syria, and Iraq. In all, about 25,000 Armenians immigrated to America as refugees under the auspices of ANCHA (Takooshian 1986-87).

The influx of Armenian immigration to the United States picked up once again, after the liberalization of the quota law in 1965. This time the Armenians were escaping the political turmoil of the Middle East. The rate peaked as never before with the start of the Civil War in Lebanon (1975) and the Islamic Revolution in Iran (1978) (see Takooshian 1986-87). According to the 1980 U.S. census, only 8 percent of Iranian-Armenians immigrated to the United States before 1959, about 25 percent between 1960 and 1974, and 65 percent between 1975 and 1980. Nearly three-quarters of Armenian immigrants from Iran settled in Los Angeles. In an extensive survey of 195 Iranian-Armenian heads of households in Los Angeles, Der-Martirosian (1989) found additional evidence; 35 percent of her sample had arrived between 1952 and 1978, 24 percent in 1979 alone, the year following the revolution, and 41 percent since then.

The Armenian population of Lebanon is estimated to have decreased from well over 250,000 in the early 1970s to less than 100,000 in the late 1980s. Of course, not all those who left Lebanon came to the United States, though a large proportion did. Takooshian's (1986-87, 138) guesstimates range from 60,000 to 160,000 Lebanese Armenians immigrating to the United States. Unfortunately, there are no reliable statistics to indicate how many Armenians from the Middle East, or elsewhere for that matter, have settled in the United States in recent decades. I should add that most of the numerical data on the Armenian population is based on conjecture. Armenian immigration to

the United States has been "lost" in official counts for over a century. Early immigrants traveled with Ottoman papers and were often mislabeled as "Turk" or "Arab" while more recent ones obtained visas on Lebanese, Iranian, or other passports.

A group that has received little scholarly attention are Armenians who had remained or returned to their homes in Turkey after the Genocide and deportations. Most of the Armenian population of Turkey after the establishment of the Republic in 1923 lived in Istanbul. In spite of severe restrictions on their personal and collective freedom,[5] Istanbul Armenians (or *Bolcetzi* ) sustained a communal life as best they could. They maintained an Armenian press, operated Armenian schools, and continued to worship in Armenian churches. Discrimination has barred Armenians in Turkey from a wide range of occupations. At present, except for a few professionals, the majority of the population tends to earn its livelihood through business enterprises.

The situation of Armenians who remained in the hinterland was deplorable. While scattered in small towns and villages, deprived of economic and educational opportunities, lacking access to Armenian religious and communal structures, most were able to hold onto their Armenian identity in private. Over the decades, the vast majority of these by then Turkish-speaking, semiskilled, or unskilled Armenians gravitated toward Istanbul. The late Patriarch Shnork Kaloustian, who traveled repeatedly to the interior of Turkey, was instrumental in helping them relocate and be integrated in the Armenian community of Istanbul. In the pursuit of freedom, Armenians with Turkish passports have emigrated in unprecedented numbers. In the early 1960s, it is estimated that more than 120,000 Armenians lived in Istanbul. At present, only about 30,000 remain. Armenians from Istanbul have come to the United States; Los Angeles alone is reputed to have received some 10,000 Istanbul Armenians in the last twenty years. There is also a sizable *Bolcetzi* population in the New York metropolitan area. Others though have settled in Canada, Australia, France, Germany, and Argentina.[6]

Starting in the 1970s and most recently in late 1980s, large numbers of Armenians were allowed to leave Soviet Armenia.[7] These were mostly those Armenians and their descendants who had repatriated to Soviet Armenia between 1946 and 1960 (an estimated 250,000) and

had not been able to assimilate with the native population. Given a chance to leave, they did. Heitman (1988)[8] puts the total number of Armenians who emigrated from Soviet Armenia to the United States between 1971 and 1988 at 47,700 (71.3 percent came between 1971 and 1980, 13.4 percent between 1981 and 1986 and 15.3 percent came in 1987-88 alone). More are coming. Their favorite destination remains Los Angeles. Estimates suggest that between September 1988 and September 1989, another 13,500 Armenian refugees came from Soviet Armenia and Iran.[9]

With the exception of Fresno (CA), the earliest Armenian immigrants settled predominantly in urban industrial centers of the Northeast such as New York City, Providence (RI), Worcester (MA), and Boston (MA). Some moved soon to midwestern cities such as Chicago, Detroit (MI), Racine (WI), and Waukegan (IL) where jobs were more plentiful. The social and demographic characteristics of the migrant population determined their early settlement patterns. Typically at the beginning, when the immigrants consisted of single young men or married men who had journeyed without their families, Armenians shared living quarters in cheap, overcrowded boardinghouses or tenements. These residences tended to be in densely populated areas of the state with easy public access to factory jobs. The immigrants' aim was to save as much money as possible to send back home or to finance the travel of other family members. For many of this first wave of immigrants, their stay in the United States was perceived as temporary. However, the situation in Ottoman Turkey soon terminated such aspirations. In time, they were joined by women and children. As families regrouped, and others were formed, their living conditions improved and communal life flourished.

Compared to other immigrants of that period, the majority of the Armenians were literate, over a third were skilled artisans, and a few were businessmen and professionals. In spite of their skills and business acumen, most had no choice but to become laborers in manufacturing industries because they did not have proficiency in English and their capital resources were almost nonexistent. For many though, that was just a stepping-stone for private ownership in a small retail store. Fresno again was the exception. There, Armenians were engaged in agricultural production and packaging. Hard work (and the expansion of the U.S. economy) eventually paid off, especially after

World War II. Large proportions of the immigrants' children went to college, and entered white collar or professional occupations. The road to success was also the move to suburbia in the 1950s and 1960s.

Recent Armenian immigrants, like other post-1965 (legal) immigrants to the United States, do not conform to the stereotype of the poor, often illiterate peasant of earlier generations. For the most part, the newest arrivals come with greater resources than in the past. They are more likely to be proficient in English, have higher levels of educational attainment and occupational skills, and a few seeking political asylum from the turmoils of the Middle East have brought with them their fortunes. At the very least, the vast majority of these newest immigrants have experienced modern urban environments. Thus, it is possible to concur with Mirak's (1980, 142) suggestion that socioeconomic success for these newcomers was achieved at a faster pace than for those who came at the turn of the century. He explains that the majority of refugees who received loans from ANCHA were able to repay their debts within a few years.[10] Small business ownership was and continues to be the typical route to the American Dream for many Armenian immigrants. However, increasingly, one also tends to find among the immigrants sizable proportions of professionals, such as physicians, dentists, pharmacists, engineers, architects, scientists, and academics who manage to establish themselves relatively quickly in the United States.[11]

### *Estimates of Size and Location*

Often-quoted estimates of the number of people of Armenian descent in the United States at the present time range from 600,000 to 800,000.[12] In the mid-1970s, the estimates stood between 350,000 and 450,000, with about 45 percent living in New England and the mid-Atlantic states, another 15 percent in Michigan, Illinois, Ohio and Wisconsin, and the remaining 25 percent in California (Mirak 1980; Avakian 1977b). In recent years, as the demographic characteristics of the Armenian-American population have changed so has their geographical distribution. Sizable communities have sprung up in Florida and Texas warranting the establishment of churches. Others, such as those in Seattle (WA) are in the process of organizing a congregation. Elsewhere, such as in Tucson (AZ), Atlanta (GA),

Baton Rouge (LA), Minneapolis (MN), Las Vegas (NV), voluntary associations were created. On the other hand, once well-established Armenian churches and communities have lost their vigor or ceased to exist. For example, the Protestant Armenian church of Haverhill (MA), emptied of parishioners, was dismantled in 1977 (Mirak 1980, 141). Similarly, the St John the Baptist Armenian Apostolic Church in Syracuse (NY) is apprehensive about its future. Its congregation has aged or died and few newcomers seem to be drawn to Syracuse (*Armenian American Almanac* 1990).

A rough measure of the dispersion of the Armenian-American population in various regions of the United States at the present time would be to count the number of Armenian churches that hold regular services in any given area. Typically, Armenians have established a church in a new location as soon as an optimum number of congregants were able to sustain one. I have tallied the total number of Armenian Apostolic, Protestant, and Catholic churches in the country and calculated their geographic distribution (see table 1.1). Fifty percent of all Armenian churches are located in the mid-Atlantic states and New England, 33 percent in California alone, 14 percent in the Midwest (WI, IL, MI), and the rest are in Texas and Florida. The fastest-growing Armenian-American population is undeniably the greater Los Angeles area.

The Armenian settlement in Los Angeles had a slow start. According to Aram Yeretzian, the very first Armenian in Los Angeles was a student who came from the East Coast for health reasons around 1900. Then an Oriental rug merchant arrived; and soon they were writing letters to their friends and relatives and asking them to join them. Yeretzian was a Protestant minister and social worker who had the opportunity to gather firsthand information on the Armenians in Los Angles which he presented as a thesis at the University of Southern California in 1923. He writes that there were between 2,500 to 3,000 Armenians at the time of his study. The majority had come from Turkey, but there were a few from Russian Armenia. There were three Armenian women who had married American men, and twelve men who had married American, Spanish, and other women. Armenians had established a number of voluntary associations and two churches; one Apostolic and one Protestant, the Armenian Gethsemane Congregational Church, which had more than seventy

members. Yeretzian notes that 2.3 percent of the Armenian population in Los Angeles in the early 1920s were professionals, 39.5 percent were skilled laborers, 23.5 percent were farm laborers and the rest laborers in other occupations. In general, Yeretzian found Los Angeles Armenians to be hardworking, thrifty, enterprising, resourceful, and highly individualistic; most of all they were loyal and obedient citizens.

Since 1965, Los Angeles has attracted a large proportion of immigrants from Lebanon, Iran, Turkey, and the bulk of refugees from Soviet Armenia.[13] Metropolitan Los Angeles boasts twenty-two churches, more than three-quarters established after World War II. It also claims the lion's share of Armenian all-day schools (twelve schools, including five high schools). Indeed, all available data indicate that the Armenian immigration boom in Los Angeles is about twenty years old. According to the U.S. census, 52,400 Armenians lived in Los Angeles in 1980 (reported in Der-Martirosian, Sabagh and Bozorgmehr 1990).[14] Of these, only 28.1 percent were born in the U.S. (including 19.5 percent born in California), while the overwhelming majority (71.9 percent) were foreign-born.[15] The foreign-born consisted of those born in Iran (14.7 percent), the USSR (14.3 percent), Lebanon (11.5 percent); Turkey (9.7 percent), and other Middle Eastern nations (11.8 percent). The remaining 9.9 percent came from Eastern Europe or elsewhere. Furthermore, only 17.1 percent of those born in Turkey and 15.1 percent of those born in the USSR immigrated before 1950. The biggest influx of immigrants arrived after 1975: 74.8 percent of Iranian-born Armenians, 71.4 percent of Lebanese-born Armenians, 66.9 percent of those born in USSR, and 53.1 percent of those born in Turkey.

It should be noted that scholars find that these statistics from the 1980 census underestimate the actual number of Armenians in Los Angeles,[16] and elsewhere in the U.S. for that matter (see Lieberson and Waters 1988). Moreover, the massive influx of Armenians to Los Angeles did not stop in the 1980s; on the contrary, it seems to have accelerated (Der-Martirosian, Sabagh, and Bozorgmehr 1990). Elsewhere in the United States, foreign-born Armenians are estimated to constitute about 40 percent of the Armenian-American population. More specifically, the foreign-born make up 43.2 percent of Armenian-American population in San Francisco, 26.5 percent of

those in Fresno, 30.7 percent of those in Boston, 32.3 percent of those in Worcester, and 33.3 percent of those in Chicago (Sabagh, Bozorgmehr, and Der-Martirosian 1988). These figures are comparable to the proportion of foreign-born found in the New York sample (38.8 percent).

In metropolitan New York and New Jersey where the survey was conducted, the Armenian-American community is relatively large.

**TABLE 1.1**
**Distribution of Armenian Churches by Geographical Location**

| | Diocese | Prelacy | Protestant | Catholic | Subtotal | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **California** | | | | | | 38 |
| Los Angeles | 6 | 5 | 10 | 1 | 22 | |
| Fresno | 3 | 1 | 4 | - | 8 | |
| San Francisco | 2 | 1 | 3 | - | 6 | |
| Sacramento | 1 | - | - | - | 1 | |
| San Diego | 1 | - | - | - | 1 | |
| **Mid Atlantic** | | | | | | 57 |
| Metro NY & NJ | 10 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 18 | |
| NY State | 4 | 3 | - | - | 7 | |
| Watertown | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 6 | |
| Worcester | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | 3 | |
| Massachusetts | 4 | 3 | - | - | 7 | |
| Providence | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | 3 | |
| New Hampshire | - | - | 1 | - | 1 | |
| Connecticut | 3 | 1 | - | - | 4 | |
| Philadelphia | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 | |
| Washington, DC | 1 | 1 | - | - | 2 | |
| Richmond | 1 | - | - | - | 1 | |
| **Midwest** | | | | | | 16 |
| Detroit | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | |
| Chicago | 4 | | 3 | 1 | 8 | |
| Wisconsin | 3 | 1 | - | - | 4 | |
| **South** | | | | | | 4 |
| Florida | 2 | 1 | - | - | 3 | |
| Houston | 1 | - | - | - | 1 | |
| | 53 | 28 | 28 | 6 | | 115 |

Unfortunately, the exact number of people claiming Armenian descent who live in this area is not known. Avakian (1977b) has estimated that 175,000 Armenians live in the Middle Atlantic States (NYC, Northern and Eastern NY State, NJ, Eastern Pennsylvania, metropolitan Washington, DC, and Richmond, VA). More specifically, he has estimated 35,000 people for the state of New Jersey and 132,000 for the state of New York. If I were to calculate my own estimates from the number of addresses on the mailing lists I was able to generate, the total number of households in the study area would number approximately 13,000. This figure translates roughly to 65,000 people (averaging five persons to a household), an estimate far below the figure provided by Avakian some ten years earlier. Probably, the universe of Armenian-Americans who are highly active in communal life and those in the periphery who identify as Armenian-American but attend communal events only sporadically, if at all, is nearer to 100,000 persons in the survey area.

Armenians have lived in New York and New Jersey since the beginning of their immigration to the United States in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Unlike other ethnic groups, Armenians were too few in number to take over entire city blocks to recreate a "little Armenia" in the New World. Nonetheless, there were some areas where their residential concentration warranted the building of a church and eventually a community hall for social activities. In Manhattan, on East Twenty-seventh Street[17] an Apostolic church was organized in 1903. Nearby on East Thirty-fourth Street, Protestant Armenians purchased a building in 1921, though prayer meetings had been held in the vicinity as early as 1881. In 1925, when the Armenian population increased in the Washington Heights area on One Hundred and Eightieth Street, the Holy Cross Church of Armenia was established (Mirak 1983, 125, 147-48, 198; Megerdichian 1983). In New Jersey, there were large groups of Armenians in Union City and Paterson (Kulhanjian 1986-87).

As the second-generation moved to the suburbs in the 1950s and 1960s, new churches, each with its own community center were established in Queens, Westchester, and New Jersey. At present, Armenian-Americans are residentially spread throughout the metropolitan area. Many of the more affluent families live in Bergen County (NJ), Westchester, and Long Island, while Sunnyside (borough

of Queens) has a concentration of less-prosperous, relatively recent immigrants.

Armenian immigration to the United States is a continuing process.[18] As long as the U.S. government welcomes new immigrants, there will be some Armenians among the hordes of newcomers who will seek refuge on its soil.[19] Even when gatekeepers deny official access, men and women who want to emigrate, like those in the decades before them, will try to circumvent the law. In the past, many Armenians entered the United States on student or tourist visas, then decided to stay; a few may have even jumped ship or entered illegally. As Nathan Glazer has accurately remarked, "the United States, it seems, remains the permanently unfinished country" (1985, 3). So too it seems, Armenianness in the United States continues to be shaped and reshaped with the influx of new immigrants.

*Local Reception to Armenian Immigration*

What kind of a reception did Armenian immigrants face in the United States of America? Borrowing Talai's characterization of London Armenians, in general, Armenian presence in American towns and cities has been described by "relative anonymity"; that is, they "encountered blankness or at the very least decided vagueness as to their origins or ethnic identity" (Talai 1984, 203). Their small numbers and dispersion throughout the United States, with one notable exception, prevented outright discrimination or prejudice against Armenians.[20] Yet, they have not been spared stereotypes.[21] Because it would have been too much of a distortion if they were called lazy, stupid, or irresponsible, Armenians together with Jews, Greeks, Syrians, and American-Japanese are in a category that brands them as "too ambitious and with a crafty kind of self-interested intelligence" (Simpson and Yinger 1985, 101). The archetypical Armenian rug merchant is portrayed as a cunning trader, a wheeler-dealer, a person with haggling in his blood.[22] The rug merchant stereotype[23] may linger on but Armenian-Americans have come a long way and have achieved too many significant socioeconomic gains to allow such disparaging images to bother them or hinder their further progress into the American mainstream.

Fresno, California, from the turn of the century until World War II was the exception to the generally indifferent reception Armenian immigrants encountered in America. Mirak (1983, 144-47), in his historical survey of early Armenian settlements in the United States, found overt discrimination only in Fresno. In 1909, the state of California attempted to prohibit Armenians from purchasing land because of their alien, "Asiatic" status, until the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in the case of *re-Halladjian* ruled that they were indeed "Caucasian" upon the expert testimony of anthropologist Franz Boas (Ordjanian 1991, 60-61).

Still, Armenians in Fresno were prevented from owning property in the "better neighborhoods"; they were excluded from social clubs and professional associations, even from local Protestant churches; they were ill-treated by clerks, salesmen, and other townspeople in their daily transactions. Armenians were called "Turks," a label they resented bitterly, and other equally demeaning slurs. Schoolchildren were open to abuse from teachers and classmates alike, which often ended up in fights. Sociologist LaPiere (1930, 390-415; 1936), who studied the Fresno Armenians in the 1920s, discovered that they were stereotyped as dishonest, lying, deceitful, parasitic, relying heavily on community welfare, responsible for most crimes in the county, and of inferior morality; all claims that LaPiere was unable to validate. The more educated among the first generation, and the second generation were most conscious of the prejudice that existed in Fresno against Armenians.

Mirak (1983, 146) postulates that the hostility against Armenian immigrants in Fresno was caused by a combination of economic and social factors. A critical mass of Armenians settling and buying land in one county induced the fears of the natives; besides, these new immigrants appeared to be stubborn, proud, and independent in spirit, contrary to the servile attitudes the Fresnans expected from aliens. Furthermore, like many other immigrants, the Armenians dressed differently, had a darker complexion, and talked in a foreign language. Fortunately, Armenians avoided direct confrontation with the natives, a trait they had mastered under Ottoman rule, thus preventing the bloodshed that was the fate of other ethnic groups elsewhere in America. Moreover, because the Armenians were relatively anonymous in the rest of California, native Fresnans were unable to

mobilize opposition against Armenians in their state to pass discriminatory legislation similar to the exclusionary laws against the Chinese. Rapid Americanization soon reduced the most visible distinctions between the Armenian immigrants and the host society.

Mirak observes that throughout the United States, "children of the pre-World War I years grew up amidst a virulent nationalist atmosphere characterized by 100 percent Americanism, which held in contempt most foreign habits and foreign-born peoples" (1983, 161). Second-generation Armenian-Americans, like most of the offspring of the immigrants arriving at the turn of the century, grew up in discriminating schools and with prejudiced teachers who called them names such as "immigrant" and "foreigner." Even later, children of ethnic descent were not spared discriminatory treatment. In the 1970s, after the civil rights movement, ethnicity become popular, something one could be proud of, though by that time, Armenian-Americans, like many other white ethnic groups had shed most of the visible peculiarities of their heritage and their ethnicity had become symbolic. Discrimination however, has not been wiped out.

The heavy concentration of Armenian immigrants in metropolitan Los Angeles in recent decades and their attempts to get organized has no doubt increased their visibility and alerted other ethnic groups competing for scarce resources in the public arena that they are a group to be reckoned with. Sociologists contend that such forces of boundary formation in the urban opportunity structure give rise to misunderstandings and stereotypes. Little is known of what non-Armenians think of Los Angeles Armenians; however, within the Armenian-American community, Soviet Armenian immigrants have become the butt of jokes and stereotypes. A well-circulated rumor suggests that supermarkets in Hollywood post signs saying; "No Dogs, No Armenians," presumably because Soviet Armenians are skilled shoplifters. These newcomers are also accused of cheating the welfare system,[24] of engaging in gang-related crime, for crowding the county jail, and for giving Armenians a negative press.[25] I should add that many individuals in leadership positions in the Armenian community in the United States have opposed Soviet Armenian emigration, interpreting the new immigrants' desire for a better life as a desertion, a betrayal of the nation.[26]

In a report to the County of Los Angeles Commission on Human Relations, Bobbi Kimble concurs with the above that, psychologically, many Soviet Armenian immigrants to Los Angeles "are unprepared for their experience in America."[27] They have problems in understanding the concept of private property, their expectations of the standard of living in the United States are highly exaggerated; furthermore, they assume that all Armenian-Americans are extremely affluent, possessing a wealth that they expect to share. They are disappointed when they realize that the privately owned, high per capita income of Armenian-Americans does not translate into a higher income for themselves. Soviet Armenian emigres are angry and frustrated at the amount of paperwork and long waiting lists they have to endure in order to be eligible for services. There are growing backlogs of applicants for English-language classes, for affordable housing, to health care, etc. In general, the immigrants behave in ways that are consistent with the norms of the USSR; for instance, they believe that public employees (including policemen who stop them for speeding on the freeway) expect to be bribed. Obviously, they end up in deeper trouble! On the other hand, service providers complain that Soviet Armenian clients are "demanding" and "pushy."

Soviet Armenians are, of course, not the only Armenians allegedly engaged in fraudulent or criminal activities. For example, a small number of "well-established" jewelers in downtown Los Angeles, immigrants from Syria and Lebanon, were charged by the FBI for money laundering for Latin American drug dealers in 1989.[28] The Soviet Armenian tendency for "playing the system," as one informant put it, appears to be a habit acquired in the Soviet Union; a useful skill that ensured their basic survival in that society. Moreover, crime and delinquency are by-products of the low socioeconomic status of many immigrant groups in the early stages of their settlement in the United States. For example, the Irish, the Greeks, the Jews, and Italians also had their deviant thugs and gangs in ethnic ghettos in the early part of the twentieth century. Eventually, with increasing assimilation and social mobility, Soviet Armenians, like others before them, will leave behind deviant goals and careers for more legitimate life-styles.

*Distinguishing Features of Two Waves of Immigration*

Armenian immigration to the United States can be roughly divided into two periods because of the demographic features of the population, the cultural baggage they brought with them, and the economic and political conditions in the host country. The first wave would consist of those who came before the quota law of 1924 and those who entered on Nansen passports or other methods until the end of World War II. The second wave would be those who entered the United States after World War II, starting roughly in the early 1950s and accelerating after 1965.

The following characteristics distinguish the two waves of Armenian immigration to the Unites States: First, most of this first wave of Armenian immigrants to the United States were from Asia Minor; directly or indirectly, they were survivors of the Genocide and deportations. They had been uprooted, orphaned, widowed, left with no kin; they were generally an oppressed, traumatized people. In contrast, the post-World War II Armenian immigrants to the United States were more likely to be members of younger cohorts; to many of them, the Genocide was not a personal experience.

Second, the earlier immigrants had firsthand experience of living on ancestral soil with deep roots to the land. In contrast, with the exception of Soviet Armenians, most postwar Armenian immigrants came from the diaspora. At the close of World War I, after being forced out of their ancestral lands, Armenians established new communities in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt, Cyprus, Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, France, Argentina, Venezuela, and so on. This changed dramatically the provenance and social characteristics of Armenian immigrants to the United States after the 1950s.

Third, when the early twentieth century Armenian immigrants arrived in the United States, they were more likely to be shocked and overwhelmed by the complexity of modern technology and social relations they encountered. Industrialization had not penetrated as many aspects of life in Ottoman Turkey as it had in the United States. Again, in sharp contrast, an urban experience and a cosmopolitan outlook tend to be the norm for the post-World War II immigrants. Fourth, Armenians who entered the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century were only a fraction of one of the largest

immigration movements in human history. They found a host society that was not welcoming of foreigners. The xenophobic mood that had created the "100 percent American Movement" was virulently hostile to ethnic cultures and life-styles. Attempts were made to "Americanize" the hordes of newcomers as quickly as possible because they were believed to be ignorant, uncouth, dirty, immoral, genetically inferior. On the other hand, the social climate in the United States, especially in the 1970s and 1980s was somewhat more tolerant of ethnic differences.

Fifth, in the second wave, Armenian immigrants were more likely to have high school, even college, education, occupational skills adaptable to an industrial economy, and some financial resources. In addition, they were more likely to be proficient in English. As mentioned above, the newcomers had an easier process of adaptation and integration into American society, a point that has become the cause of much animosity and conflict between the two groups. Sixth, the two Armenian immigration waves to the United States also differed in their psychological makeup and worldview. Those who came in the earlier wave were made to feel inferior to their hosts, the WASP elite, the "Old Americans" (Warner and Srole 1945). They had few resources at the time to bridge the social distance imposed upon them. Until the resurgence of ethnicity in the 1970s, calling someone an "ethnic" had a pejorative connotation. In comparison, the post-World War II immigrants were more likely to be self-confidant about their ethnic identity and place in the world, particularly those born in the Middle East who had developed a sense of Armenian superiority over their Arab neighbors.

Having been rejected by the local population as a burden, Armenian refugees survived initially on help by Western relief organizations and eventually developed a strong institutional system. Self-reliance for their material and emotional needs became their trademark. Moreover, Middle Eastern societies were just beginning to industrialize and modernize when the Armenians settled there in the early twentieth century in large numbers. Competing with relatively less modernized sectarian and ethnic groups who shared their environment, a sizable proportion of the Armenian population appropriated lucrative niches in many domains and achieved social mobility in a very short while. Consequently, their reputation as "smart" people[29] and their nouveaux

riches status boosted their self-assurance, even arrogance, and translated into a generalized sense of well-being, a sense of Armenian prestige and power. Whether this was an empirically valid self-concept is beside the point. Though the post-1950s realities in the United States were different from the Middle East for many an immigrant, such feelings nurtured in childhood remain hard to crush.

Finally, the first wave did not have the advantage of a well-established Armenian-American community like the second wave did. This communal structure cushioned the shock of immigration and helped the integration process. In the 1970s, several Armenian-American organizations founded centers to provide social services to newcomers.[30] Established mostly with state and federal funds, these centers offered a wide range of services such as locating housing, finding jobs, placing students in schools, as well as providing referrals to technical training and certification centers, legal counseling, especially immigration matters, psychological and personal counseling, translation services, and classes in English and office skills. One such program in Los Angeles, the Armenian Relief Society, employs twenty-six staff members in four offices and operates on a budget of $900,000 a year.[31] Another program is the Armenian Evangelical Social Service Center of Hollywood. Established in 1977, it claims to have serviced 12,000 people in 1989-90 alone and is "one of the most successful of its kind in America."[32]

It should be noted that the vast majority (90-95 percent) of men and women of Armenian descent in the United States trace their roots to Western Armenia, that is present-day Turkey, rather than Eastern Armenia.[33] This background accounts for the cultural legacy Armenian-Americans inherited from their ancestors. Three significant characteristics distinguished the two groups at the turn of the twentieth century.[34] First, the Eastern Armenians had no experience of the *millet* (community) system nor of living among Muslims, while the Western Armenians were unfamiliar with Russian governments and people. Second, Western Armenians were direct targets of the Genocide and deportations. Third, the class structure and occupational traditions of Eastern and Western Armenians were different.

Eastern Armenians were more likely to be urbanized, educated, and a sizable proportion had traditionally been employed in the administrative and intellectual arenas of the Russian Empire.

Furthermore, a small number had been able to achieve significant mobility as industrial entrepreneurs, such as those in the oil business in Baku. In Western Armenia, on the other hand, the elite, consisting of the *amiras* (the aristocracy), the intelligentsia, and the professional and bourgeois classes resided in Constantinople. The rest of the population remained physically and socially alienated on the Anatolian Plateau. They were composed of a petty bourgeois minority (merchants, shopkeepers and artisans) who lived in the towns and cities; and a peasant majority (small land-holding subsistence farmers) who were scattered in the rural heartland. It was these common people who were uprooted and nearly annihilated. Given this information, one can explain the Armenian-American proclivity to self-employment; the inordinate imprint of the Genocide on the lives of the survivors and their offspring; their hatred of the Turks; the predominance of Western Armenian dialect; the popularity of "oriental" music using Near Eastern drums and fiddle (*davoul, zurna* ); the frequency in which shish kebab, *beurek* (cheese puffs) and *dolma* (stuffed vegetables) is consumed, and so on.

Armenian-Americans are a very heterogeneous group. There are those who immigrated at the turn of the century, the "old-timers" who have lived in the United States most of their lives, by now in their late seventies and eighties. Then there are the post-1950s immigrants, a category spanning some forty years of immigration that is composed of a diverse group of people differing on their length of residence in the United States, characteristics they acquired in their country of birth, etc. And then of course, there are the American-born: the children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren of the immigrants. All these collectivities are further divided by religious affiliation, ethnic background of parents, age, gender, and socioeconomic status. Nonetheless, the central thesis of this book is that generational presence in the United States of America is the most important variable in explaining an individual's expression of Armenianness.

At the collective level, the dynamics of Armenianness in various localities are shaped by the following variables: the proportions of foreign-born to U.S.-born, the country of birth and the length of residence in the United States of the foreign-born, and the socioeconomic composition of the group. As illustrated above, the Armenian-American community of Los Angeles is quite different

from, let us say, the Boston community. Yet, there is an overarching pattern; these manifestations of Armenianness are not totally random.

A caveat is in order here. As historian Thomas Sowell has written: "No ethnic group has been wholly unique, and yet no two are completely alike" (1981, 4). The assimilative profile of Armenian-Americans is somewhat different from any other ethnic group's because of their particular socioeconomic characteristics, their cultural patrimony, their time of first settlement, the subsequent influx of newcomers, their size and dispersion, and the structural conditions of twentieth-century United States. However, these assimilative pathways are not unique. They are similar to those experienced by many white ethnic groups of the "new" immigration, that is those who arrived between 1890 and 1920, such as the Jews, Greeks, and Italians. Indeed, this study may primarily interest Armenian-Americans; however, it is of relevance to a wider audience because it documents an important process in American social life and history and contributes to the sociological literature on race and ethnic relations.

Overall, Armenian-Americans have made significant inroads into mainstream American society, in politics, industry, finance, medicine, the arts, and every other aspect of public and private life (see Armenian Assembly of America 1987). Many have gained fame and fortune, in little or big ways, while acknowledging their Armenian roots and feeling very proud of their ancestry. Armenian churches and communal structures have also multiplied and spread throughout the United States more than ever before. It is time for this small but vibrant ethnic group to come out of the intellectual closet. Armenian-Americans should no longer be considered a "hidden minority" in sociological discourse. In a way, this book celebrates their coming of age in America.[35]

## Plan of this Book

In the chapters that follow, I will examine major components of Armenian-American culture and social relations. In chapter 2, I describe the religious and political culture of the early generations and how it has shaped and pitted Armenian-Americans into two rival camps characterized by bitter animosity and at times even bloodshed. I will begin with a description of the historical antecedents of the

dispute, then look at the role of the Armenian church in maintaining communal life and identity. I will subsequently examine the traditional Armenian political parties and the challenging institutions that have emerged. Inevitably, this chapter also discusses the new realities in diaspora relations, especially the rapid changes that are taking place in the new Republic of Armenia.

In chapter 3, I describe the Armenian-American community and the subgroups that constitute this community. The typical features of collective life, the voluntary associations, the activities they sponsor, and their popularity with different generations are then examined. Instrumental motives for personal gain or profit are also discussed, though they only affect a small fraction of the population. In chapter 4, I look at the debate on language. Foreign-born Armenians, especially those from the Middle East, and the American-born dispute the need to establish and finance institutions that serve to perpetuate the Armenian language. These differences stem from the varying definitions of Armenianness that they possess. The debate is central at this juncture in Armenian-American history and has been magnified by the influx of large numbers of immigrants in recent decades.

After an analysis of the processes that transform immigrants into hyphenated Americans, chapter 5 explores sources of Armenian identity. The Genocide remains a core element in defining Armenian-Americans, but it is in the family that Armenian identity is ultimately nourished and sustained. Other factors are Armenian cuisine, travel to historic Armenia, and celebrities and media representations of Armenia and Armenians. In the last chapter, I examine variables that influence rates of Armenian intermarriage. Intermarriage is often blamed as the "cause" of assimilation. However, throughout this study the data demonstrates that the passing of generations is more significant in changing Armenianness. This final chapter also provides an ideal typical representation of symbolic Armenianness in the United States. It describes the most common personal expressions of such an identity and the institutional structures that are most congruent with symbolic Armenianness. But first, in the remainder of this chapter, I explain assimilation and ethnic identity in American society and define concepts used in this study. Last but not least, I describe the sources of the empirical data used here and provide a profile of Armenian-Americans from the study sample.

## Assimilation and Ethnic Identity in America

The question of "who shall be allowed to become an American" (Glazer 1985, 3) has dominated the public agenda of the United States for about two centuries and continues to do so today. Armenians who immigrated to America at various points in the twentieth century faced policies that were a mixture of assimilation and cultural pluralism. As Simpson and Yinger have observed, the policies of the United States of America vis-à-vis its immigrants and the ideological atmosphere of the nation have been contradictory during the course of its history.

> [The United States is] basically assimilationist, not only permitting, but demanding conformity to a rather narrow range of options.... On the other hand, religious pluralism is now nearly fully the fact as well as the ideal; the country has followed a "hands-off" policy toward the private associations and foreign-language newspapers of many immigrant groups; there is some support for language diversity.... Blacks, Chicanos, Indians, Asians and others assert their separate identities with some approval and even support from the majority; and pluralism is widely accepted as a value. If America has never been so evenhanded in her treatment of different groups as her ideology would imply, neither has she been so utterly indifferent to the range of cultures and peoples as her most severe critics have declared. (Simpson and Yinger 1985, 18)

The ideological origins of American identity or national character were influenced by the English tradition of separation of church from state and the value of liberty, as well as the thinkers of the Enlightenment with their emphasis on universalistic principles (Gleason 1980, 31-32). The early settlers thought of themselves as "new men" produced from many different peoples, and throughout the nineteenth century, the open-door immigration policies were justified by the belief that newcomers could adjust and be absorbed into the American nation (Handlin 1959, 146). The significant characteristics of American identity were its openness to anyone who wanted to become an American, its newness, which unlike the European example was not only a model for tomorrow but would be realizable in the future (Gleason 1980, 32-33; see also Erikson 1963; 1974, 75-77). These abstract, ideological underpinnings of American national identity explain only partly the initial ambiguity toward the issue of immigration. Most significantly, the predominant Anglo-Saxon origins of the founding families and the relatively small numbers of immigrants who came to the United States before the 1830s[36] had

much to do with the magnanimous attitude of the early Americans.

Following the potato famine, unprecedented numbers of Irish (and German) immigrants arrived in America. Their large numbers, their immigrant status, their poverty, and most of all their Catholicism triggered one of the earliest conflicts between the newcomers and the so-called Native Americans (Ravitch 1988, 56). By midcentury, the battles were being fought over the public schools, which were intended by the "native" Protestant majority to Americanize the Catholic foreigners with their potentially disintegrative influence. These confrontations were eventually settled with an accommodation: the Catholics could become Americanized (in common schools) without giving up their religion (Gleason 1980, 36; Ravitch 1988, 27-76).

The debates over the ethnic component of the American character started after the Civil War, but were most poignant with the advent of the "new immigrants" from about the 1890s to the passage of the restrictionist laws in 1924. Anglo-conformity, the melting pot, and cultural pluralism were the three perspectives that in response to specific historical circumstances offered models of assimilation in America. Rather than being realistic descriptions of behavior and explanatory hypotheses, these were ideologies about the desired outcome of the massive immigration movements. They were broad interpretations of the unity and multiplicity of the American national identity, each stressing one tendency over the other (Gleason 1980, 46; see also Gordon 1964; Handlin 1959, 146-66).

### *Anglo-Conformity*

The basic assumption of the Anglo-conformity model was the superiority and desirability of the English language, institutions, and culture. It called for the total renunciation of the immigrants' imported language, value system, and traditions in exchange for active conformity to the influential Anglo-Saxon core group's culture. Its origins stemmed from the early English settlers who dominated the fledgling American nation (Gleason 1980, 41). In its mildest form, it remained their implicit assumption regarding immigration throughout American history (Gordon 1964, 80). However, this social doctrine became strongest and most popular at the turn of the twentieth century. It was a defense against the "new" immigration tides whose

increasing numbers, foreign ways and developing political power were making the established elite "feel like aliens in their own homeland" (Gleason 1980, 42).

There was a widespread belief, imbued with elements of social Darwinism, that these new immigrants had "inferior genetic traits [that] would dilute the strong, industrious, pioneering spirit of the older racial strains and that this infusion posed a threat to the future of the nation.... Not only were the new immigrants charged with being ignorant, poor, dirty, immoral, and overly fecund, but their eagerness to work at any wage caused American workingmen to accuse them of stealing jobs, undercutting unionization, and depressing the American standard of living" (Ravitch 1988, 174). Therefore, there was a feverish urgency to Americanize the uncouth hordes by every means available. The society elite, like the Daughters of the American Revolution, and the Boston-based North American Civic League for Immigrants, volunteered their time, organizational skills, finances, and underlying value system to a multitude of social programs.

The settlement houses and adult education classes provided instruction in English, American history, and government, hygiene, domestic science, etc. Upper-class women were particularly active during this period in organizing classes, and lectures, publishing books and pamphlets,[37] supplying health care and child care services and so on (see Rothman 1978, 101-126). Most of all, the general opinion was that the public school system ought to take charge of the children of the immigrants, instead of their incompetent families and disintegrated communities (Ravitch 1988, 171), and turn them into stalwart American citizens, indoctrinated with patriotism, love of freedom, and democratic principles. The pressures to Americanize intensified during World War I when the political loyalty of the large German-American community and other hyphenated Americans was in question. The "100 percent American Movement" created a national hysteria that was instrumental in enacting the racist law of 1924. Overall, the push to Americanize was successful.

One cannot deny that immigrant groups made substantial contributions to American society by supplying the labor that furthered its development, as one cannot ignore the ethnic provenance of many American cultural elements such as pizza, frankfurters, chow mein, St Patrick's Day parades, blues, and jazz. Yet immigrant groups

had little influence on the core or mainstream cultural patterns themselves, which remained predominantly Anglo-Saxon (Gordon 1978, 171; Steinberg 1981). As the case of Armenian-Americans will illustrate, Anglo-Conformity "substantially triumphed in the behavioral area ... acculturation without massive structural intermingling at primary group levels has been the dominant motif in the American experience of creating and developing a nation out of diverse peoples" (Gordon 1964, 114).

*The Melting Pot*

The "melting pot," an expression borrowed from Israel Zangwill's play, labeled an implicit ideology that existed long before the phrase was coined in 1908.[38] The open-door immigration policy was a reflection of America's belief in its ability to mold a national character from a large collection of nationalities, religions, races, and cultures (Handlin 1959, 146). It "assumed that the conditions of American life, particularly egalitarianism and the opportunity for material improvement, would automatically transform foreigners into Americans—with some help from the common schools" (Gleason 1980, 38). Unlike the earlier model, the melting pot ideology gave credit to the immigrants' heritage and assumed that each would contribute in a small way to the emergent American character, which was to remain basically Anglo-Saxon.

The single melting pot ideal was later refined to the "triple melting pot" hypothesis—incorporating Protestant, Catholic, Jew—because it was found that there was little assimilation across religious lines (Kennedy 1944, 1952; Herberg 1960). Will Herberg observed that there was a paradox in contemporary America of "pervasive secularism amid mounting religiosity" (1960, 2). The most Americanized descendants of the immigrant generation were increasing their church attendance and their identification with religious denominations (see Lenski 1963). Herberg argued that religious institutions had survived Americanization most successfully, and traditional forms of worship had changed to adapt to the new environment. Religious affiliation offered the ideal link to one's immigrant ancestors, yet remained an acceptable way to manifest one's commitment to the spiritual ideals of American ideology of

freedom and democracy (see Gleason 1980, 50-51).

Borrowing Marcus Lee Hansen's (1938) "third-generation return hypothesis," Herberg explained that the immigrant generation had established churches and synagogues as the center of their communal life and the repository of their sacred symbols. Their children's generation had revolted against their immigrant parents and cast off all their ties to the past, including their religious affiliation. The grandson had no reason to feel inferior, but his problem was the need to belong. What kind of an American was he? Herberg's answer was that the third generation's affiliation to one of the three major religious communities satisfied that urge to belong, because nationality backgrounds had already been eroded by assimilation.

### *Cultural Pluralism*

Unlike the first two models of assimilation, which assumed the disappearance of the immigrant's original culture and communal life, the cultural pluralism model advocated the preservation of the immigrant's heritage as a democratic principle. Its chief advocate was Horace Kallen, a German Jew who grew up in America and became a professor of philosophy and psychology. He believed that each immigrant culture had something unique to contribute to the larger society. Cultural pluralism was a counterattack against the excessive assaults of the Americanization movement on the human dignity and self-worth of the bewildered immigrants. It advocated a nonlinear perspective of assimilation whereby each ethnic group preserved its communal life and its culture but was integrated legally, economically, and politically into the American society. Thus, America was seen as a "mosaic," a "federation of nationalities," not a melting pot (Handlin 1959; Sowell 1981).

Kallen was not a pragmatist but a romantic and an idealist. The cultural pluralism model was the liberal, tolerant antidote for forced assimilation. Kallen never refined his concepts or formulated in detail how cultural pluralism would work. As a model it remained an underdeveloped vision that would be borrowed and reinterpreted during the ethnic "revival" period. With the participation of the United States in World War II, ethnicity faded once again as a dimension in American identity because the unity of the nation was at stake.

### *Park's Race-Relations Cycle*

A pioneering attempt at constructing a theory of assimilation was Robert Park's four-stage race-relations cycle (see Coser 1977, 357-84). Park hypothesized that there were four progressive and irreversible processes: contact, competition, accommodation and assimilation. As a result of immigration, groups come into contact, and this results in competition between them, which is accompanied by conflict. Eventually there is some degree of accommodation between them, and finally assimilation results (Park and Burgess 1969). Park defined *assimilation* as "a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons and groups, and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life" (Park and Burgess 1969, 735). He argued that the most rapid assimilation would take place in intimate, intense relationships such as the ones with family members and friends; that is, through primary group ties. Secondary associations, such as the ones at the workplace, were more likely to facilitate accommodation. Yet for Park, assimilation does not totally eradicate individual differences nor stop competition and conflict (Park and Burgess 1969, 737).

Park's race-relations cycle was criticized because it was not readily applicable to many groups; the cycle was rarely complete; and its irreversibility was not substantiated. Overall, the traditional models of assimilation outlined above were vague and often overlapped. Precise formulations could not be derived from them to test their empirical validity. They did not take into account group distinctions, cohort effects, and historical circumstances.

### *W. Lloyd Warner and Associates*

In recent reviews, W. Lloyd Warner's contribution to assimilation theory has not received the recognition it merits. Even though his value judgments on the hierarchical positioning of immigrant cultures and his deterministic approach regarding the certainty of assimilation are no longer acceptable, many of the underlying assumptions on assimilation held today are derived from his empirical observations. In

*The Social Systems of American Ethnic Groups,* part of the Yankee City series, Warner and Srole found that in spite of the variations in the cultural heritage of the eight ethnic groups they examined (which included the Armenians) and the differences in their emergent communities, there were nonetheless remarkable similarities among them. They postulated that an immigrant group's adjustment to American life is dependent on individual and group processes of social mobility. In other words, "each group enters the city at the bottom of the social heap (lower lower class) and through the several generations makes its desperate climb upward. The early arrivals, having had more time, have climbed farther up the ladder than the ethnic groups that followed them" (Warner and Srole 1945, 2). Thus, as groups assimilate, ethnic characteristics for determining status are substituted for social class criteria.

Warner and Srole argued that assimilation and social mobility are the products of the power of the host society to dictate its wishes on immigrant groups (by either subjugating them or by facilitating their absorption) and that of the immigrant group to resist such pressures. The degree of subordination of an immigrant group is calculated by the following criteria: "(1) freedom of residential choice, (2) freedom to marry out of one's own group, (3) amount of occupational restriction, (4) strength of attitudes in the host society which prevent social participation in such institutions as associations and cliques, and (5) the amount of vertical mobility permitted in the host society for members of the ethnic or racial group" (Warner and Srole 1945, 289). On the other hand, the strength of the immigrant group depends on the influence of its religious institution over its members; the competence of ethnic schools in socializing new ethnics; the effectiveness of its voluntary associations; and the political and economic coherence of the group.

It is hypothesized that the greater the cultural and racial differences of an immigrant group from white "old American" Protestant stock, the greater the social distance imposed between them, and the longer it will take to bridge that distance. Assimilation is measured in terms of proportions of individuals exiting the ethnic collectivity, the probability of the entire group being absorbed into the mainstream, and the openness of the host society to accept these changes. Thus,

Warner and Srole would predict that Protestant Armenians are more likely to be assimilated at a faster pace than Apostolic Armenians, a hypothesis that is validated by the results of the New York survey.

*Gordon's Theory of Assimilation*

Milton Gordon's theory of assimilation is one of the most comprehensive treatments of the subject. Gordon (1964) constructed a typology of seven subprocesses of assimilation, an ideal type construct in which assimilation in general and each type in particular can occur at varying degrees. Gordon postulated that cultural differences between immigrant groups would disappear gradually under the influence of public education and the mass media. The ossification of the immigrant's cultural heritage is called *cultural assimilation* or *acculturation.*

*Culture* is understood to be a people's material and nonmaterial way of life. It is language, art, architecture, literature, music, religious traditions, political institutions, as well as aesthetic preferences, recreational patterns, cuisine, dietary styles, and so on. It is also a group's norms, values, and belief systems. Gordon argued that acculturation to the values and life-style of the host society is more readily accepted than structural assimilation. He postulated that cultural assimilation is likely to take place first, and for some groups may stop there, either because the host society is unwilling to accept them as peers or because the group espouses a very strong ideology that discourages social relationships with out-groups.[39]

*Structural assimilation* is defined as the incorporation of an ethnic group on a large scale into the host society's institutional organizations on a primary group level; that is, through intimate face-to-face relationships.[40] The opposite of structural assimilation occurs when members of an ethnic group confine their intimate, diffuse relationships, or their leisure-time contacts to their own ethnic group. Mingling extensively with the host society on an open, personal basis leads to friendships with nonethnics and eventually to Gordon's third type of assimilation: *marital assimilation* or *amalgamation.*

The fourth subprocess of assimilation is *identificational assimilation.* Particularistic allegiances to the ethnic group are superseded by a shared feeling of peoplehood with the core or host

society. Instead of ethnic or hyphenated identifications, people come to see themselves as "Americans." The fifth and sixth types measure the absence of prejudice and discrimination. The last type, *civic assimilation,* implies the absence of major value and power conflicts between the ethnic group and the host culture. These conflicts may be over political issues or civic ones such as abortion, school busing for minority children, capital punishment, and the like.

Gordon developed two other concepts that help explain behavioral outcomes. *Ethclass* is "the intersection of the vertical stratifications of ethnicity with the horizontal stratifications of social class" (1964, 51). People's social participation is generally confined to one's ethclass, that is, one's social class segment within one's ethnic group. Next, Gordon distinguished between historical identification and participational identification. *Historical identification* is a sense of peoplehood, or "interdependence of fate" provided by the ethnic group. *Participational identification,* on the other hand, is a feeling that one is most congenial with one's subsociety or ethclass.[41]

People tend to behave according to the subsociety they find themselves in. Acculturation is easier to accomplish than changing one's subsociety or reference group. Nonetheless, structural assimilation is crucial in the overall process, because according to Gordon, once it takes place, other types of assimilation are likely to follow.[42] The underlying assumption rests on the notion that intimate relationships are likely to reduce prejudice and hostility between groups while the opposite process of structural separation or compartmentalization is likely to promote ethnic stereotypes, negative attitudes, and overall conflict. What is a positive outcome for the whole society may not be so for the ethnic groups. As Gordon (1964, 81) notes, "the price of assimilation, however, is the disappearance of the ethnic group as a separate entity and the evaporation of its distinctive values." Following Warner's lead, it is assumed that the ethnic group will gradually lose its holding power over the individual. Ethnicity will be replaced by social class as a determinant of values, attitudes, and life-styles (Alba 1976, 1978, 1981; Crispino 1980; Gans 1979; Gordon 1964; Steinberg 1981).

Gordon's theory of assimilation has been criticized as static and biased in its implication that immigrant groups are "passive" and have a strong desire to assimilate (see Henry 1973, 6). It has also

overlooked the distinction between immigrants who settle permanently in the host society and those who come as sojourners (see Portes and Bach 1985). The most constructive criticism has come from Alba who finds Gordon's approach

> ahistorical, individualistic and incrementalist—which, in other words, does not connect assimilatory processes to macrostructural dynamics, but instead conceives of them as individual decisions played out against a static background. Such a conception naturally places the emphasis on social psychological constructs, including the acceptability of a group's members to the majority or core and, perhaps more importantly, their motivation to merge with the majority. At the same time, it is implicitly one-directional: assimilating individuals are affiliating with a new group, thereby dropping the cultural and other garb of their original one. (1985b, 134-35)

Yet, Alba does not discard the whole theory, nor is he blind to the overwhelming statistical evidence that points to the assimilation of white ethnic groups. He suggests that a distinction must be made between two types of assimilation, individual and group forms. Though analytically these two are separate, empirically it is hard to distinguish between them. In the first one, people cross ethnic boundaries changing their reference groups while the boundaries themselves are not transformed. In the second type, the change occurs to the ethnic boundaries; they become porous and social markers become obsolete (see Alba 1985b, 135-36).

A theory of assimilation that includes structural processes of group formation and dissolution in its framework is believed to be more comprehensive. One such attempt has used the words *assimilation* and *dissimilation*[43] to describe a variable that can range in degrees of more or less "boundary reduction" between two or more societies or cultural groups that come into contact (Yinger 1981). *Assimilation* is used when distance between groups is reduced to a minimum; *dissimilation* when differences between groups are at a maximum. Pluralistic movements, separatist movements are examples of dissimilation. It should be noted that dissimilation may take place alongside assimilation. As the Armenian case demonstrates, "at this period in human history at any rate, it is not a matter of assimilation versus ethnicity, but of assimilation and ethnicity" (Yinger 1981, 261).

The underlying assumption of most of these theories of assimilation has been called the "straight-line" model (Sandberg 1974). This model

describes a process along a continuum with complete segregation at one end and complete assimilation at the other; however, unlike the melting pot ideology, it does not make value judgments about the inferiority of immigrant cultures (Gans 1979, 194). The straight-line model assumes that the first generation, that is, foreign-born, is the most "ethnic" or culturally distinct. It is hypothesized that the longer the generational presence of ethnic groups in America, the less will be their adherence to a separate ethnic culture and behavioral forms. In conclusion, with one correction, Gordon's theory of assimilation, with its underlying straight-line assumption, remains the most powerful explanation to date. Assimilation *and* ethnic identity make up the pattern of Armenian-Americans and other white ethnic groups (see also Alba 1990; Waters 1990).

### *Defining Ethnicity*

*Ethnicity* derives from the Greek *ethniko*, an adjective of *ethnos*, referring to people or nations (Cashmore 1984, 85-90; see also Petersen 1980). The term has gained currency, academically and popularly, in recent years.[44] Early emphasis on the ascriptive components of ethnicity are now perceived to be "static and descriptive" and the tendency is toward more "dynamic and analytic" conceptualizations (Patterson 1975, 305). Fredrik Barth's (1969) definition of ethnic groups in terms of boundary maintenance is widely accepted. Barth focuses on boundaries rather than cultural and social contents of a group. In this view, boundaries, or discrete categories persist, despite "osmosis" or movement of individuals entering and exiting the group. Moreover, cultural features and characteristics of individuals may change, even organizational forms may change, but the distinction between insiders and outsiders, "us" versus "them," remains the essence. It is the boundary that defines the group, determines members from nonmembers, organizes behavior and social relations, recognizes limits and shared worldviews, and reinforces differences.

Boundaries remain meaningful and ethnic groups survive if cultural differences persist between interacting groups. On the other hand, frequent communication with outsiders reduces cultural distinctiveness as each borrows from the other, resulting in congruence of cultural codes and values (Barth 1969, 15-16). Cultural

matter may vary, be learned, change, but boundaries, or the criteria for membership, determine the continuity of a group. Elements of today's culture are not necessarily the result of the culture that was in the past. Barth recognizes that ethnic identity is a status that, like sex and rank, exerts role constraints on the individual. Individuals are permitted to choose from a limited number of other groups for their transactions in social situations. Furthermore, in social systems where there are power differences between groups, the culture of the more powerful group is perceived as superior, that is, worth emulating (Barth 1969, 21).

Ethnic boundaries have two sides, "us" and "them." The differences are both subjective and objective, real or perceived cultural markers. Boundaries are either self-imposed or imposed by others. For example, what constitutes Armenian identity in Boston is very different from that in Cairo. American ethnic identity is defined by insiders and is a voluntary, subjective boundary,[45] while that of minority groups in the Middle East is imposed by outsiders, their boundaries are far less permeable. An Armenian, a Jew, a Greek with an Egyptian passport is not an Arab and cannot be one. Similarly, Armenians in Lebanon have dual identities. As Lebanese citizens, Armenians have a set of privileges and responsibilities; for instance, they are allowed to work, vote, travel with Lebanese passports, but they have to pay taxes and are precluded from a number of government positions and political appointments. Births, marriages, divorces, deaths in Lebanon are registered with the religious sect that one's father belongs to. There are no separate personal status laws in Lebanon; marriages between Christians and Muslims cannot be registered unless the bride or the groom converts, homogenizing the religion of the couple. Middle Eastern Armenians have been called "traditional ethnics" (McKay 1982) in contrast to Armenian-Americans who are described here as symbolic ethnics.

Increasingly, scholars have come to recognize ethnicity as a variable that may be an essential resource, irrelevant or a crippling liability, depending on the context. For example, an Armenian-American salesman may choose to activate his or her Armenian identity to establish rapport and make a sale by saying: "I'm Armenian too." On the other hand, a Lebanese-Armenian may choose to "pass" as an Arab if the situation warrants it. "People often have a repertoire of ethnic attributes from which they can select the ones most suitable

to a given situation" (see Hicks 1977, 17). However, one should not forget that not all ethnic labels are readily manipulated. Highly assimilated German Jews were as likely as their Orthodox brethren to find themselves in a concentration camp during World War II.

For immigrant groups in America, or their descendants, identity beyond the stage of cultural assimilation is based on double boundaries; from within, through socialization, from without through intergroup relations (Isajiw 1974). Complete assimilation takes place when insiders cease to socialize their young in the ethnic subculture and its identity, and when outsiders do not perceive any salient markers that distinguish them from others. However, once a collective consciousness is established and distinctive characteristics of an ethnic group recognized, the group "takes on a self-perpetuating quality and is passed from one generation to the next" (Cashmore 1984, 87). Inertia may sustain communal structures and institutional forms of ethnicity for a long time; moreover, it does not need large numbers to do so. "Polarization" of ethnic groups into a small but highly active core contrasted with a large, assimilated aggregate of symbolic ethnics is increasingly the pattern the Armenians and other white ethnic groups of the "new" immigration are adopting (see Cohen 1983, 51).

### *Ethnic Revival Hypothesis*

In the 1970s, academic and popular interest in ethnicity increased (see Polenberg 1980). The assimilation of the "new" immigrants, those who had come to the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century, was challenged. This was possible because of the relative absence of empirical evidence (Crispino 1980; See and Wilson 1988; Simpson 1968). The proponents of the ethnic "revival" or "return" proposition charged that the melting pot perspective was a myth; assimilation had not been completed as assumed. Behavioral differences in family life, educational and occupational achievement, political participation, and religiosity between ethnic groups remained significant (e.g., Abramson 1973, 1975; Greeley 1974; Greeley and McCready 1975; Kobrin and Goldscheider 1978; Novak 1973). The literature was inundated with examples of how ethnicity was alive and strong. This "new ethnicity" became fashionable yet controversial in academia, the mass media, and popular culture.

The ethnic revival hypothesis had a number of prominent critics. Myrdal (1974, 19) dismissed the "return" as "upper-class intellectual romanticism." Thernstrom (1982, 19) declared it "the last gasp of groups nearing extinction." Alba (1985a, 159, 170) called it an "illusion" that "existed more in the eyes of its beholders." Others charged the new ethnicity to be a paranoid position in "defense and adaptation to conditions of shame, disillusionment, exposure, and despair" of white working-class Americans who did not fulfill the American dream (Stein and Hill 1973, 96). Indeed, the political and economic grievances of white working class people were seen by many to be the real issue in disguise (see Patterson 1979; Steinberg 1981; Stein and Hill 1977).

The ethnic resurgence hypothesis stems from Marcus Lee Hansen's "law of the third generation return." Hansen, in a speech delivered to the Augustana Historical Society (a Swedish group), in 1937, had predicted that "whenever any immigrant group reaches the third generation stage in its development a spontaneous and almost irresistible impulse arises which forces the thoughts of many people of different professions, different positions in life and different points of view to interest themselves in that one factor which they have in common: heritage—the heritage of blood" (1938, 12). The third generation of the "new" immigrants had matured by the 1960s and 1970s and were vociferously claiming back their ethnic roots and culture, or so it seemed to many observers. They were taking trips to the old country, showing an interest in the culture and arts of the ethnic group, and exhibiting a general nostalgia and compassion for their grandparents' life-style and values. To many, this was indeed the "revival" that Hansen (1938, 9) had foreseen: "what the son wishes to forget the grandson wishes to remember."

Several studies demonstrated that for descendants of immigrant stock beyond the third generation, ethnic membership and traditions fulfill their primal need to belong. Ethnicity offers them self-identity, self-worth, pride, and intimate, trusting relationships in a highly mechanized, impersonal social environment (Greeley 1974; see also Keller 1988). Recent surveys have also found that in spite of widespread mixed ancestry among whites, there is increased tendency among third-generation, college-educated men and women to identify with one single ethnic group. The data corroborate the resurgence

thesis, though younger cohorts are consistently more assimilated on cultural indicators (Alba and Chamlin 1983).

The key to understanding the continued ethnic identity alongside assimilation is the distinction Glazer (1954) makes between "ideological" and "cultural" returns. Mere identification does not imply that there is a return to old-style ethnicity of the grandparents' generation. The fact remains that empirical studies have not been able to prove a cultural "revival" for white ethnic groups of the "new" immigration (Alba 1976, 1978, 1985a; Cohen 1983; Crispino 1980; Moskos 1989; Sandberg 1974).

Joshua Fishman (1985) corroborates that the "revival" was more attitudinal than behavioral. The 1960s and 1970s were not unique to a resurgence of ethnicity; they were also characterized by the Vietnam War, the civil rights movement, the feminist movement, the gay rights movement, etc. Fishman stresses not the end of ethnicity, but the broadening of the permissible limits of what it means to be an "American." The "revival" brought "sidestream ethnicity out of the family and neighborhood closet ... and made it salon-worthy" (Fishman 1985, 510; see also Alba 1985a, 172). He goes on to explain:

> Thanks to the revival, sidestream ethnicity has come to play a public role very similar to that of religion in American life.... A sidestream ethnicity is recognized as being not only "natural" but as being humanizing and strengthening in some very general sense, and those who implement or display it situationally are not outsiders in urban America.... It controls no domain of behavior completely but it is "a good influence" and makes for a more interesting, colorful, rooted life. It is family-stability-related, neighborhood-stability-related, personal-stability-related. Americans now expect each other to have some sidestream ethnicity; any sidestream ethnicity will do and all ethnicities are equally good ... because their role is no longer to help or hinder "being a success in America" ... but to provide "roots": meaningful cultural depth to individual and family life. Thus a sidestream ethnicity as part of one's background ... has become part of an enriched and overarching *American* experience.... There is no need to hide it.... What is worse, it would be denying an aspect of American identity. (Fishman 1985, 511, italic in original)

Predicting the doom of ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s may have been premature; on the other hand, its continued vitality remains somewhat exaggerated (Alba 1976, 1045). There is little evidence of any cultural or behavioral "return" or "revival" to the foreign-born grandparents' life-style. Indeed, as Alba explains:

> this ethnic resurgence was more in the eyes of the beholders than it was in the events among the Catholic [and other] ethnics and, moreover, that the increased visibility of ethnicity was paradoxically a product of the same forces sapping ethnicity's vitality. During the 1970s, ethnicity could be celebrated precisely because assimilation had proceeded far enough that ethnicity no longer seemed so threatening and divisive. Ethnicity was made more visible by the penetration of prominence in American life. (1981, 98)

Ethnic groups and communities of the "new" immigration are, to use Alba's fitting analogy, in their "twilight" phase. Yet, "it is a twilight which may never turn into night" (Alba 1981, 97).

### *Symbolic Ethnicity*

Since there is little doubt that the process of cultural assimilation has been almost accomplished for most white ethnic groups, the task at hand is to explain the residuals. Ethnicity in contemporary America does not disappear altogether in later generations, instead, as Herbert Gans (1979) says, it becomes "symbolic." Later-generation ethnics do not need ethnic cultures and institutions in order to conduct their daily lives, be it in the workplace or at home. Instead, the use of visible symbols satisfies their need for belonging, furnishes a differentiating factor in a culturally homogeneous society, and for highly (geographically) mobile individuals, it offers a sense of commonality and continuity. Thus, ethnicity becomes expressive, a voluntary affiliation that can be pursued in one's leisure time. It loses its hold over the individual; it becomes an artificial commitment that can be easily reversed when the surrounding environment becomes less tolerant of ethnic differences.

Instead of "being ethnic," later-generation descendants manifest their ethnicity through personalized interpretations and "varying mental constructions of ethnic behavior" (di Leonardo 1984, 228). The American value of individualism, the vocabulary of freedom and human rights dominates the scene. The different components of identity: the sacred, the secular, the political, the structural, are more likely to be separated and adapted to individual ends. For example, Zenner (1985, 120) notes that before the eighteenth century there was no such thing as a Jewish atheist or a non-Jewish Jew. Similarly, being an Armenian some two hundred years ago meant being a member of the Armenian Apostolic church (e.g., see Sarkisian 1984, 41). "What

has happened is that many former life-long commitments, including those relating to kinship and ethnicity, have become commodities" (Zenner 1985,130).

How is symbolic ethnicity manifested? Gans (1979) outlines the many ways in which ethnicity is expressed. Most of all, it is an awareness of one's immigrant origins, a nostalgia for the past, and an immense pride in the group, its culture, its traditions, its history, and its people, past and present. Gans goes on to add: "All of the cultural patterns that are transformed into symbols are themselves guided by a common pragmatic imperative: they must be visible and clear in meaning to large numbers of third-generation ethnics, and they must be easily expressed and felt, without requiring undue interference in other aspects of life" (1979, 205).

Symbolic ethnics follow Porter's admonition that "the obligation to conserve culture is different from the obligation to live it" (1975, 300). They consciously seek to preserve heritage cultures by sponsoring lectures, funding chairs or departments in major universities, by establishing scholarships in ethnic studies, by collecting arts and artifacts and setting small sections in existing museums or starting new ones, and so on. I call these depositories for heritage conservation "knowledge banks." Symbolic ethnics have an interest in the events of the homeland and its history, which they turn into another symbol, disregarding its domestic and foreign policy problems.

Visibility is an important characteristic of symbolic ethnicity. Cultural paraphernalia such as bumper stickers, T-shirts with ethnic symbols and slogans, photographs, or other representations of ethnic monuments and artifacts are displayed prominently on one's person, car, home. Famous ethnic personalities such as actors, artists, politicians, business tycoons, become a source of pride. Appropriating illustrious figures as one's own, by name-dropping or similar associations increases one's feelings of pride and we-ness. Symbolic ethnicity is also expressed through institutions that do not require active participation and combine ethnicity with other interests, such as dance, music, athletic clubs, travel clubs, festivals, parades.

Rites of passage (such as births, deaths, marriages), religious or civic holidays (such as Christmas, saints days, Thanksgiving) are occasions for enacting ethnicity with one's family and kin, often in the privacy of one's home. Ethnic food forms a central element in such

rituals, and it is not surprising that it is often imbued with positive connotations of warmth and sharing. The continued success of these ceremonies is their sporadic nature and the fact that they are convenient and do not upset everyday life and its preoccupations. Family, food, and rituals are cornerstones upon which symbolic ethnicity is built, whether or not the food, the rituals, or even the family members are ethnic in actual content or composition; the important thing is that they are perceived as such.

Michael Schudson (1984, 179) makes an interesting case for the "emergence of 'convenience' as a desirable product characteristic" in the United States, in the 1920s. He uses the almost sudden adoption of the cigarette and its widespread popularity as a case in point. He argues that by the early twentieth century, the "tempo" of life in America had quickened; time was becoming scarce. People were realizing that they had new social worlds and possibilities to choose from. Moreover, goods were becoming democratized, standardized, and available at any time and in any place. Products/goods were getting milder, less offensive, and easier to use by all social groups. Schudson explains further: "Convenience becomes especially desirable only when 'time' becomes an objectified and precious commodity itself. Only when people come to conceive of their lives as involving the 'spending' of time do they come to care about the 'saving' of time by the use of convenience goods" (1984, 199).

Convenience became a desirable quality in the United States in the twentieth century, because the country by then had become affluent and the clock or watch omnipresent. America had become a "time famine" culture. Convenience, it should be noted, is not a "labor-saving" but rather a "suitability" factor. Schudson goes on to say that another desirable social goal in modern, urban societies is "connection" or "circulation." "People not only want to be valued in their own circles but want to be available to enter new social groups. People seek ways to increase their mobility or social circulation" (1984, 202). Thus another attribute of convenience is being socially "nonrepellent."

Schudson's analysis of convenience as an important attribute of consumerism can be expanded to include most aspects of modern life. The concept of convenience is applicable to ethnic commitment and

participation in America (see also Kramer and Leventman 1961). Whether cooking an ethnic dish, learning a new language, listening to ethnic radio, attending ethnic rallies or church services, suitability or convenience guide conduct, because time, energy, and income limitations are serious preoccupations of ethnic Americans. An ethnic culture must be "easy," and within the reach of all; the less the prerequisites, the wider the appeal. That is why, eating ethnic food is the most democratic form of ethnic maintenance; it is even more convenient than cooking it. Furthermore, symbolic ethnics have moved out of the ghetto for good; ethnic practices that risk isolating people and reghettoizing them will be most unpopular.

What are the functions of symbolic ethnicity in later generations? Ethnicity, in America, in the latter part of the twentieth century, continues to fulfill social and psychological functions for individuals who crave rituals (Steinberg 1981, 262), roots, or a sense of belonging (Driedger 1976; Lambert and Taylor 1988), and community. In spite of homogenizing tendencies in the modern world today, there are diametrically opposite movements toward "traditional harbors—religion, family, ethnic groups, and neighborhoods" (Keller 1988, 176; see also Gordon 1978, 121).

Recently, Richard Alba (1990) has argued that ethnicity, in lieu of social class, continues to be an important marker of social boundaries in the United States. Moreover, for all those Americans who are the descendants of the big immigration waves of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the very journey of their grandfathers and grandmothers from the Old Country, their early settlement patterns in the New World, their initial struggles and hard work toward social mobility have come to define an essential part of American experience and identity. The immigrants' stories are almost as significant as the *Mayflower* in describing what it means to be an American today. Alba proposes the emergence of a new ethnic group; the European-Americans. It is a group characterized by subjective consciousness of a kind; not by demographic or other objective indicators. Much of my own conclusions about Armenian-Americans fit into this thesis, with one caveat. Armenian-Americans are unlikely to blend into this nondescript European-American group in the near future, at least not yet, because their immigration experience is a recent and still

unfolding process. Another obstacle may be their membership in the Apostolic church. Like the Jews and Greeks, this religious affiliation tends to reinforce ethnicity (see chap. 2).

Finally, there is a need to ask: Is symbolic ethnicity any less real for later-generation ethnics? Compared to traditional ethnics, it is acknowledged that there is little discrimination or prejudice against symbolic ethnics. Symbolic ethnicity has few costs for the individual. It is ideally suited for white-middle-class Americans who have contradictory goals. On the one hand, they seek a sense of community, the American need to know "where one comes from," and on the other hand, they desire individuality, freedom to choose, be it a product in a store or an ethnic heritage (Waters 1990). The boundaries separating symbolic ethnics from nonethnics are self-imposed and thus can be easily obliterated. Nonetheless, the varied ways in which symbolic ethnics desperately wish to "feel" ethnic must be subjectively real. W. I. Thomas's theorem comes to mind: "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Coser 1977, 521). If Armenian-Americans and other white ethnics define their identity as real, then it should be real in its consequences, whether or not its content is substantiated by objective definitions of culture (see di Leonardo 1984, 228).[46]

### *Ethnicization or Ethnogenesis*

Ethnicization or ethnogenesis is the process whereby an aggregate of immigrants from the same national or regional origin acquire self-consciousness as a collectivity and create an ethnic group out of their shared American experience (Greeley 1974, 291-317; Greeley and McCready 1975, 211; Sarna 1978; Stein and Hill 1973, 99). There is considerable consensus among scholars that ancestral cultures are not recreated in totality in the new environment. Rather, a "hybrid culture" (Shibutani and Kwan 1965, 526) or synthesis, a "product of interaction" containing elements from the ancestral heritage and others from the core or mainstream culture in the new environment emerge (Charsley 1974, 357; see also Kayal 1973, 419).

> Each immigrant group, anxious to preserve its traditional ways, at first endeavored to create a sub-culture of its own. In order to do so it was obliged to develop separate religious, educational and benevolent institutions. But this step alone showed how strong was the pressure toward conformity with the existing American pattern, for these voluntary organizations, none of which had existed in Europe, adopted a common American form. (Jones 1960, 317)

The ethnic subculture and subsociety is created in response to the immigrant experience and the exigencies of the new environment. It provides comforting commonality and familiarity to the immigrants and mediates between the old world and the new (Gordon 1964, 242). Ethnicization may be activated successfully by immigrant leaders and brokers by manipulating symbols and emphasizing a bond to a national origin. Such was the case of the Polish-American community. Lopata (1964, 206) writes: "The consciousness of a bond between all persons of Polish birth or descent living in America grew up gradually as a result of the efforts of a number of different leaders." Similarly Schiller (1977) describes how the Haitian ethnic group in New York was created by one leader who exploited the American political system and the Democratic party machinery to ethnicize an immigrant collectivity for economic and political benefits.

The creation of an ethnic communal structure is essential to socialize the American-born generations to carry on the ethnic subculture and identity. Yet, there are fundamental differences between the generations: "Fathers, sons and grandsons may differ among themselves not only in the *degree* but also in the *nature* of their identification with ethnicity" (Nahirny and Fishman 1965, 312, italics in original). For the foreign-born, the ethnic background is a taken for granted as a way of life. Not the American-born; estranged from the tangible traits of the ancestral heritage, they have no memory or loyalty to the old country. Yet, they become more "conscious" of their identity; their tie is social not cultural (Nahirny and Fishman 1965, 322; see also Sengstock 1975, 151; Warner and Srole 1945, 124-27). American-born ethnics need to study ethnic cultures to "know" and "appreciate" their heritage, but their socialization is "usually kept within reasonable bounds and need have little or no relevance to daily life" (Nahirny and Fishman 1965, 323; see also Kramer and Leventman 1961).

*Instrumental or Ideological Mobilization*

The primordialist and instrumentalist debate in explaining ethnic mobilization and boundary maintenance occupies a central place in ethnic studies. This debate stems from such early masters of sociological thought as Tönnies, Durkheim, Cooley, Thomas, Park, and Wirth, who had conceptualized human relations, affiliation, and allegiance in dichotomous terms; from Gemeinschaft to Gesellschaft, from mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity, from primary to secondary relations, from communal to individualistic emphasis, and so on. In this scheme, ethnic relations were irrational ties, assumed to disappear with increasing modernization and industrialization. Ethnic ties were characterized as ascribed, particularistic, diffuse, kinlike bonds. Shils (1957) was one of their first critics. He proclaimed that ascriptive networks or "primordialism" continued to be a significant element in the social, economic, and political life in the second half of the twentieth century (see also Bendix 1967; Gusfield 1967; Litwak 1985, 16-30; Mayhew 1968). A heated academic discussion developed around the nature of ethnic resilience and its continued vitality in modern societies.

To some, the salience of ethnicity in America was attributable to the distinctive features of the cultural heritage of the immigrant groups (e.g., Abramson 1973; Greeley and McCready 1975; Mindel and Habenstein 1981; Schooler 1976; Slater 1969). Others criticized the primordialism argument by saying that if ethnic allegiance is natural, then it needs no explanation. Rather, they conjectured, the tenacity of ethnicity in contemporary life was situational; it was sustained by structural (economic and political) conditions (e.g., Barth 1969; Portes 1984; Olzak and Nagel 1986; Yancey, Ericksen and Juliani 1976; Yancey, Ericksen and Leon 1985).

Ethnic allegiance was a tool used in boundary formation of goal-oriented groups competing for scarce resources (political, economic, and social) in the public arena (Bell 1975; Glazer and Moynihan 1970, 1975; Hannerz 1974). White working-class ethnics in urban centers in the United States were mobilized because of their fear of the expanding power of blacks and the threat they perceived to their homes, their jobs, and their general well-being. Ethnicity was just the idiom for promoting group solidarity. The situation was not unique to

people of immigrant descent. For example, native Pan-Indianism (American "Indian" identity) is perceived as a sociopolitical entity, a unifying construct that cannot rely on cultural homogeneity or inherited traits. Not only were ancestral cultures widely divergent, but few "Indians" today share the culture of their forefathers (Wax 1973; Jarvenpa 1985).

Indeed, no one can deny that ethnicity, as much as social class, remains an important variable of identity and differentiation in the world today. As Keyes so succinctly says: "Primordial identities continue to serve as gyroscopes for those buffeted by uncertainties as to the best way to pursue their interests or for those alienated by the dehumanized agencies designed to organize the ordering of social ends in a rational way" (1981, 28).

McKay (1982) has tried to resolve the dichotomy between the purely ideal, affectional and the purely material, instrumental components of ethnicity by arguing that it is false and both viewpoints are interrelated (see also Burgess 1978; Johnston and Yoels 1977; Lal 1983; Williams 1977, 53-54, 68). He suggests that the linkages between the two need to be specified empirically. The primordialism thesis or compulsory ethnicity is essential for understanding the emotional basis and tenacity of ethnic ties, but it is a type of psychological reductionism that fails to offer comprehensive theoretical explanations. On the other hand, the mobilizationist perspective is guilty of materialism. Moreover, it overlooks socioeconomic, gender, and other differences within the ethnic group and does not ask whose interests are being pursued. Therefore, simplistic theories of economic and cultural determinism are unable to explain complex phenomena like ethnicity.

McKay proposes a typology of five kinds of ethnic behavior and identity (ethnic traditionalists, ethnic militants, ethnic manipulators, pseudo-ethnics, and symbolic ethnics) and locates them along a two-dimensional matrix. The horizontal axis measures degrees (from low to high) of ethnic manifestation that tend to be based on instrumental interests; the vertical axis measures degrees (from low to high) of ethnic manifestations that tend to be based on primordial interests. First, *ethnic traditionalists* describes "people who are culturally and socially 'rooted' in the symbols and primary relationships of their ethnic groups" (McKay 1982, 403). To such people, their socialization

processes and their history are more significant than political and material interests in influencing behavior and identity. Their conflicts are more likely to be based on normative differences. Examples of ethnic traditionalists are the Hutterites and Amish in North America; Armenians, Copts, Kurds, Maronites in the Middle East. They are high on primordialism, low on materialism.

Second, *ethnic militants* interfuse interest and affect. These are groups "culturally and structurally 'rooted' as traditionalists, but are also intensely involved in conflicts over political and economic resources" (McKay 1982, 405). The Basque ETA, the Quebec separatists, and the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) are examples. Ethnic militants testify that modernization is not necessarily incompatible with primordialism. On the contrary, it can change, modernize. In the last decade or so, there has been a trend toward more militancy among ethnic traditionalists. Of course, not all traditionalists advocate or espouse violence. Why some do and others do not requires further investigation. Ethnic militants are high on both measures of interest and affect.

Third, *ethnic manipulators* are sheer opportunists. Their goals are primarily economic and political. Their cultural, linguistic, and other primordial attributes are latent. Ethnic entrepreneurs or brokers are examples of people who negotiate ethnic boundaries and mobilize support for their cause. This category has medium amounts of each measure of interest and affect. Fourth, *pseudo-ethnics* "try to make their pursuit of political and economic goals more legitimate by finding an ethnic foundation on which they can be based" (McKay 1982, 407). They transform dormant ethnic categories into a group but they continue to resemble interest groups and social movements rather than ethnic groups per se. This type is low on primordialism and medium on material interest. Finally, *symbolic ethnics* have low levels of interest and low levels of ideology. Most white ethnic groups in America can be classified under this category.

McKay's matrix is useful for a number of reasons. It shows that there is a spectrum of activities in ethnic behavior and identity that ranges from simply feeling ethnic to cultural/folkloric participation, to membership in militant organizations. It describes the various combinations of interest and membership criteria different collectivities exhibit. It allows longitudinal analysis of groups as they

change in form, function, and membership. And in this case, it explains the meaning of Armenianness in the various diaspora communities.

*Middlemen Minorities and Enclave Economy*

Historically Armenians have often been called middlemen minorities. The term *middlemen minorities* characterizes the orientation of the immigrants to their place of residence. First, they come as sojourners, "birds of a passage," mainly for economic profit but stay on for generations because the political climate in the homeland is unfavorable and because sojourning increases business success. Their ideology remains that of a sojourner because some day they intend to return to their ancestral lands. This ideology prevents them from establishing lasting social relationships with their host society; instead they turn inward to the ethnic group for trust, mutual assistance, social relationships, and marriage partners. They conduct and control community affairs and do not rely on public charity. They form highly organized communities with their churches, schools, press, cultural and recreational organizations. They are accused of being clannish, foreign, and unassimilable. These are mostly justifiable accusations because they are ethnocentric, their reference group being insiders. It is not surprising that they "often emphasize the importance of maintaining a good name or preserving the family honor within the community" (Bonacich and Modell 1980, 16).

High communal solidarity regulates the distribution of resources and keeps control over internal competition. The economic activity of the middlemen minorities is the key variable in their existence. They are mostly traders, independent professionals, skilled craftsmen, often economically successful. Their occupations can be characterized by liquidity and transportability. Middlemen minorities are criticized for their disloyalty, for draining the resources of the host society, but this hostility and conflict is functional because it isolates them and increases group solidarity. What starts off as a voluntary segregation for the sojourners may eventually become forced segregation. Relinquishing the ideology of an eventual return to the homeland implies assimilation. Economic and social integration is the doom of the middleman form (Bonacich 1973).

Recently, the concept of *enclave economy*, allegedly broader and less rigid than the middlemen minority form, has been used to explain the Latin (mostly Cuban) entrepreneurial success in Miami (Portes and Bach 1985). An enclave economy is established when political and economic structures of the host society prevent the structural assimilation of ethnic minorities. That rejection and "prior experience in buying and selling" forces new immigrants to look to their co-ethnics for capital, labor, and economic opportunities. Enclave economies may deal with trade or any type of small-scale production or manufacturing.

Enclaves offer more favorable economic conditions to workers by modifying the character of the class relationship between capital and labor. Employers exploit ethnic bonds to maintain a cheap and acquiescent labor force. In return, they are obligated to reserve supervisory positions for their fellow immigrants, promote their occupational skills, and help them establish self-employment when they eventually make the move (Portes and Bach 1985, 343). Armenian immigrants in Los Angeles and New York appear to have established an enclave economy in the jewelry business.

Recent evidence (Sanders and Nee 1987) demonstrates that the enclave economy is more profitable for ethnic entrepreneurs and business owners than to their employees; the latter do better economically when they assimilate into the larger society. This is because, first, the success of the enclave economy depends on the maintenance of a large pool of low-wage laborers. Second, the paternalistic assistance that ethnic entrepreneurs give to immigrant workers upon their arrival may not be so helpful in the long run because in the process immigrant workers accumulate a web of obligations and favors they might not be able to repay.

The middlemen minority form and the enclave economy are brought about by a combination of cultural variables pertaining to the immigrant group (as in Light 1972), contextual variables that are the properties of the recipient population (as in Blalock 1967), and situational variables such as that of being a sojourner (as in Bonacich 1973; see Turner and Bonacich 1980). The question that is of interest here, however, is how long can ethnic enclaves or middlemen minorities be sustained? Is it possible to retain these forms into the second and subsequent generations? From a case study of small

businesses among Japanese-Americans, Bonacich and Modell (1980) suggest that leaving small businesses means decreasing ethnic solidarity. Those who moved to jobs in the corporate economy were less likely to retain close ethnic bonds and contacts. Later-generation upwardly mobile Americans of ethnic descent who do not depend for their livelihood on ethnic enterprises are most likely to become symbolic ethnics. The significance of instrumental motives for ethnic solidarity is indeed undeniable. Ideologies (of eventual return or otherwise) are also important but harder to sustain over time without an economic base.

## Methods of Data Collection and Description of the Sample

The core of this study rests on Milton Gordon's theoretical framework on assimilation. As shown above, Gordon postulated that there were seven analytically separate processes or dimensions of assimilation. Each group that immigrates to America forges its unique trajectory because of variations in the time of arrival, socioeconomic conditions in the host society, the cultural baggage they bring with them, and so forth. All these variables affect the pace and outcome of each subprocess of assimilation and the overall process. Implicitly, Gordon's theoretical framework assumes that assimilation in the United States follows a straight-line model; that is, the longer the generational presence of an immigrant group, the greater the probability of assimilation.

In empirical terms, the degree of assimilation is measured as a percentage difference between the immigrant generation and each subsequent American-born generation. The first generation's cultural and behavioral patterns are used as the statistical baseline, and all departures from it imply a movement along the continuum toward "more" assimilation. It should be noted that the cultural heritage of the first generation is far from being homogeneous, and, of course, not all immigrants of Armenian descent are well versed in the Armenian language and cultural heritage. Thus, the distinctions between the various generations should be understood in relative not absolute terms.

In this study, an Armenian-American is defined as a person who resides in the United States of America (whether or not he or she is

legally a citizen), whose ancestors originated in historic Armenia, and who implicitly claims Armenian descent by participating in the survey.[47] No behavioral preconditions are included in this definition. In addition, foreign-born Armenian-Americans may use other hyphenated labels to characterize themselves. The prefix Lebanese, French, Romanian, Middle Eastern, Soviet, Istanbul, Aleppo, and so on before the word *Armenian* designates the city, country, or region of birth or residence in the diaspora that a respondent identifies with.[48] These labels are not mutually exclusive; rather depending on the context, individuals use them discriminately to reduce (or increase) social distance.

Assimilation is the dependent variable in this study, that is, the phenomenon under investigation. The seven subprocesses of assimilation have been operationalized with a battery of questions and Likert-type attitude statements to measure empirically the assimilative profile of American-Armenians in metropolitan New York and New Jersey. The independent variables, that is those that influence the outcome of assimilation, used in this study were: generation,[49] respondent's place of birth (variable Origin),[50] religious affiliation (variable Religion),[51] ethnic origins of respondent's parents (variable Ancestry),[52] ideological beliefs or sympathy to Armenian political parties (variable Symparty),[53] age, gender, marital status. Finally, social class was measured by respondent's education, occupation, and income.

### *Sampling Procedures*

Master mailing lists of the Apostolic (Sees of Echmiadzin and Cilicia),[54] Protestant, and Catholic Armenian churches were obtained.[55] These lists represent people of Armenian descent who have at some point in their lives participated in, or attended activities sponsored by ethnic voluntary associations, or contributed financially to Armenian churches or other institutions. The totality of these lists, it is assumed, make up the universe of Armenian-Americans who are either actively or very loosely connected to the formally organized Armenian-American community of metropolitan New York and New Jersey.

The Main Sample of the survey was selected randomly from the above mailing lists. Every twelfth address was chosen from the two Apostolic mailing lists and every sixth household from the two

Apostolic mailing lists and every sixth household from the two Protestant and one Catholic church lists. If an address had already been selected, the one directly below was picked. In spite of the care taken not to duplicate addresses, two such mistakes were made. There was some duplication in the two Apostolic lists, but less in the others. Households whose names appeared on more than one mailing list had a higher probability of being selected into the sample. It also implies that they were more active ethnically. The Main Sample consisted of a total of 1,145 households. The Apostolic addresses numbered 950 (83 percent). The Main Sample also included 87 addresses from the Catholic list (7.6 percent) and another 108 from the New York and New Jersey Protestant church lists (9.4 percent).

To redress the organizational bias in the sampling procedure, a second group of names was generated through the snowball technique. Respondents in both samples were asked to supply the names and addresses of persons of Armenian descent who were believed not to be affiliated with Armenian organizations. Some names were obtained through my own network of friends and acquaintances who knew of the study and through an advertisement that appeared in the *Armenian Reporter*, the local English-language weekly. The Snowball Sample yielded 144 addresses. All the names and addresses in the study area that were sent to me were subsequently mailed a questionnaire.

The instructions for generating the Snowball Sample might have been misunderstood because the names and addresses of some people who were active in Armenian voluntary associations or churches were also sent to me. Nonetheless, those who responded were included in the Snowball Sample. This balances out those respondents whose names appeared on the initial mailing lists but were not organizationally active. Several of them wrote or called requesting to be included in the Snowball Sample because they felt they did not belong with the ethnically active group. They did not realize that there was only one questionnaire for both samples. Their names had been included on Armenian mailing lists because they had at some time in the past made financial contributions to Armenian churches or organizations in memory of a dead relative or had a similar incidental involvement. The total number of questionnaires that were mailed was 1,289. The geographical parameters consisted of the state of New Jersey, the five boroughs of New York City, as well as Long Island,

Westchester, and Suffern counties. Addresses outside this area that were sent in by the snowball technique were not included.

Attitude statements used in the survey were pretested on twenty college students of Armenian descent gathered for a panel discussion at Columbia University. An earlier version of the questionnaire was administered to twelve people of Armenian descent who were believed to represent a cross-section of the population in terms of age, generation, ancestry and socioeconomic factors. The Main Sample was mailed in April 1986; the Snowball Sample in the weeks that followed. The last completed questionnaire was received in December 1986. The survey was designed and conducted using Dillman's (1978) Total Design Methods (see copy of package in Appendix). That is, each envelope was individually typed; first-class stamps were used to ensure quick delivery and return in the case of wrong addresses; the cover letter explained the academic and educational purpose of the project and promised confidentiality of responses. An identification number was written on every questionnaire; it facilitated the telephone follow-up, but hindered some people from participating in the survey. It is impossible to estimate the number of potential respondents that were lost because of the lack of complete anonymity in the study. Two weeks after the first mailing, a postcard was sent to all potential respondents. Two weeks after that, I started telephoning households that had not responded. My personal appeals were able to persuade some people to reply.

### *Response Rate*

From the Main Sample, 472 people responded to the survey, that is a 41 percent response rate. The response rate was much higher for the Snowball Sample, 78 percent or 112 replies. The combined sample, therefore, consists of 584 completed questionnaires by adult men or women of Armenian descent living in metropolitan New York and New Jersey (45 percent response rate for total sample). The response rate reaches a respectable 48 percent if I exclude the non-Armenian names, wrong addresses, and duplicates in the initial mailing.[56] Babbie (1979, 335) observes that a 50 percent response rate is adequate for analysis and reporting. He argues that a demonstrated lack of response bias and statistical biases are more important.

I was able to talk to and/or received letters from 102 men and women of Armenian descent who did not participate in the survey. I even visited with two potential respondents at their invitation. Of these almost 37 percent were too old or too ill. About 19 percent refused to participate because they said the survey was not anonymous, questions were too personal or political in nature, or because they would not participate in surveys on principle. Five percent said the questionnaire was too long or too difficult and demanding. Twelve percent said they were not interested, and 10 percent were too busy. An additional 77 potential respondents who were contacted by phone said they were too busy, promised to send in their responses, but did not. Six people said they had already sent in their completed questionnaires which I never received.

If I calculate the total number of completed responses, and the number of potential respondents I communicated with, there still remain 454 (35 percent) questionnaires that were sent out but for which I had no response. It is assumed that the reasons for their nonresponse is similar to the ones already accounted for. People are too busy, too old, too tired to devote time and energy to fill out a sixteen-page questionnaire. Old age, illness, death in the family, vacation, or moving house were reasons preventing potential respondents from participating in the survey. Older respondents, whose numbers were significant in the study, found some of the questions difficult to answer, even a 47-year-old second-generation woman observed: "I am exhausted thinking about all this—a good Armenian exercise."

Some people alluded to "Big Brother" in the use of survey information. One woman wrote, "It is not my policy to answer questionnaires of any kind." Still another woman sent me a letter from which I quote:

> Before I received your questionnaire, as an American-born of Armenian parents, I, like many other Americans, was concerned about the intrusion of "Big Brother" into our lives. I was dismayed to find that there is, also an Armenian "Big Brother."
>
> The intrusion into one's private and political affairs is often started with a comprehensive inquiry, the inquirer having the intention to keep this information confidential. However, control of the original inquirer and a second or third party makes this public, always professing well-intentioned reasons for releasing this information.

In trying to explain nonresponse on sample surveys, Goyder (1987) argues that it is fallacious to label all nonrespondents as deviant cases to be explained by social and demographic characteristics such as age, marital status, socioeconomic level, and so on. He advocates an exchange theory perspective in which the voluntaristic elements in human behavior enter into the picture. People balance costs and benefits for completing a particular survey. Some nonresponse arguments are situational, others are attitudes like sensitivity to privacy and confidentiality, or dislike of a particular form of survey or all forms. These are consistent across replications. Though an exchange "rate" for completing surveys is not clear, Goyder suggests that because of the multidimensionality of survey nonresponse, possibly one component helps nullify another, thus reducing biases.

The men and women who responded to the survey are a self-selected group who implicitly claim Armenian descent by participating in the study. Thus, the results are biased toward a more *ethnic* [57] representation of people of Armenian descent living in metropolitan New York and New Jersey. There were several differences between the Main Sample and the Snowball Sample. The reader is reminded that the Snowball Sample was in principle designed to tap men and women of Armenian descent who continue to identify with their ethnic roots but were not members of Armenian voluntary associations.

In general, the Snowball Sample tended to be younger in age (mean age was forty-three vs. fifty-seven years), predominantly U.S.-born (80 percent vs. 60 percent), more likely to have mixed parentage (23 percent vs. 8.5 percent), and twice as likely to be married to spouses who were not of Armenian descent. They were also more likely to have gone to college and beyond (65 percent v. 41 percent). On assimilation indices, respondents in the Snowball Sample were twice as likely not to speak or read Armenian (46 percent vs. 21 percent), had fewer Armenian friends, and attended activities hosted by Armenian organizations less often. They were also more likely to identify as American (12.5 percent vs. 7.4 percent).

This suggests that the Main Sample is skewed toward the immigrants and their children's generation while the Snowball Sample is skewed toward the more assimilated later generations. In spite of these differences, the two samples overlap. It was therefore decided to

analyze the results of the two samples together, for both substantive and practical reasons. The data presented henceforth are the results of the combined samples numbering 584 completed questionnaires.

*Generalization of the Study*

The main bias in this study is inherent in the method of data collection. The mail questionnaire assumes respondents are literate and proficient in English. This makes the sample biased toward the more educated segment of the population. The follow-up telephone calls were meant to correct this bias, but failed to eliminate error. In addition, sampling from organizational mailing lists increases the chances of more ethnically involved individuals to participate in the study. The Snowball Sample was meant to redress this problem, and it is hoped it did. Also, this sample tends to miss the very recent immigrants, less-educated blue-collar workers of ethnic origin, but, more seriously, it misses the younger, later-generation descendants.

The results of the survey are believed to be representative of people of Armenian descent who acknowledge their ethnic ancestry and live in metropolitan New York and New Jersey. As an aggregate, these people tend to be predominantly in the second generation, occupying middle- to upper-middle status positions. With two caveats I can confidently declare that the results of this study are generalizable to all people of Armenian descent in the United States of America. The first cautionary note argues that people of Armenian descent living in areas where there are no Armenian institutions have an increased probability to rank higher on assimilation indices (Breton 1964).[58] Last but not least, because of sample bias, these findings tend to underestimate the actual amount of assimilation of men and women of Armenian descent in the United States of America.

*Qualitative Data*

In the early stages of this study, in-depth interviews were conducted with a number of individuals highly active in and knowledgeable about the Armenian-American community in New York and New Jersey. More recently, I have conducted additional interviews in Los Angeles and Washington, DC and reinterviewed a few individuals in

New York to get an update on the latest changes in the Armenian-American community, the Republic of Armenia, and elsewhere in the diaspora. In all, there were thirty such interviews, varying in length from less than one hour to three hours. In the last several years, I had the opportunity to visit the Armenian communities of Los Angeles, San Francisco, Boston, Philadelphia, Washington, DC, and Baltimore. My impressions confirmed the general trends I had found in New York.

I identify myself as an Armenian, but was unfamiliar with the Armenian-American scene until my arrival in New York City over a decade ago; that put me in the unique position of being an insider at one level, yet an outsider at another.[59] My outsider status and my sociological training sharpened my observational tools and made me seek and question behavior that might have been taken for granted by an American-born Armenian. My insider status gave me access to Armenian-American networks; those formally organized as voluntary associations, congregations, clubs, etc., and those private ties that eventually became my friends and acquaintances. Living in New York City, I was able to participate in as many types of ethnic events and programs sponsored by Armenian-American voluntary associations as possible. I attended concerts, church services, ethnic festivals, dinner dances, ethnic theater, a convention, lectures, seminars, etc.[60] I even attended bridal and baby showers, weddings, funerals, Thanksgiving dinners, and private gatherings to learn more about Armenian-Americans. In retrospect, my participant observation, the in-depth interviews, and the unsolicited comments of the respondents validated and confirmed the statistical evidence gathered by the survey. My personal observations and the survey data complimented each other and completed the picture. In other words, the qualitative component was as valuable as the quantitative part in reaching the conclusions of this study.

### *Description of the Sample: An Armenian-American Profile*

Other than distribution frequencies, data presented in this book is in the form of simple cross-tabulations and all associations are statistically significant,[61] unless otherwise stated. It is important to note that measures of association do not determine causation. Also, the

between the variables. For example, it is often not quite clear which independent variable has more power in accounting for a given behavior.[62] More complex statistical methods and interval-level data are needed to determine the relative significance of one variable over the other in explaining assimilation and ethnic maintenance. The prime purpose of this survey is descriptive; it is hoped more explanatory studies will follow.

The demographic profile of men and women of Armenian descent in metropolitan New York and New Jersey who responded to the survey is shown below (see table 1.2). The data shows that this sample is predominantly middle-aged (the mean age being 54.3 years). It is characterized by a recent immigration history (84 percent of the sample are from the first and second generations). Respondents in the third and fourth generations tended to be younger (84 percent of them below age 50) and single (about half were not married). Also, only 11 percent of the sample had a non-Armenian parent.

**TABLE 1.2**
**Frequency Distribution of Demographic Variables of New York Sample**

| | Percentage of Total |
|---|---|
| **Sex** (N = 584) | |
| Male | 54.5 |
| Female | 45.5 |
| **Marital Status** ( N = 584) | |
| Never married | 14.7 |
| Married | 69.0 |
| Widowed | 10.1 |
| Separated/divorced | 5.1 |
| Remarried | 1.0 |
| **Age** (N = 578) | |
| 20—29 | 5.5 |
| 30—39 | 11.7 |
| 40—49 | 17.1 |
| 50—59 | 28.2 |
| 60—69 | 21.1 |
| 70 + | 17.3 |

| | Percentage of Total |
|---|---|
| **Origin of Foreign-Born** (N = 232) | |
| Turkey | 38.8 |
| Middle East | 47.4 |
| Soviet Bloc | 9.5 |
| Other | 4.3 |
| **Ancestry** (N = 584) | |
| Both parents Armenian | 88.7 |
| One parent Armenian | 11.3 |
| **Generation** (N = 584) | |
| Respondent foreign-born | 37.5 |
| Respondent U.S.-born of foreign-born parents | 46.6 |
| Respondent and one parent U.S.-born | 6.2 |
| Respondent and two parents U.S.-born | 7.0 |
| Respondent parents & grandparent(s) U.S.-born | 2.7 |

With one exception (a man who arrived in 1902 at the age of one year, born in Alexandria, Egypt), almost 17 percent of the respondents arrived in the United States between 1914 and 1924. There is a noticeable decrease in the proportion of immigrants in the 1930s and 1940s, when the quota system was in effect, when about 5 percent of the respondents arrived in each decade. Then, after World War II, there is a gradual increase which reaches its peak immediately after 1965. Almost 9 percent of respondents arrived in the 1940s, 13 percent in the 1950s, 31 percent in the 1960s, and another 18 percent in the 1970s. As noted above, this sample misses some of the most recent newcomers, only 3 percent are included here; however, the bulk of the 1980s immigrants settled in Los Angeles, not New York. In all, 37.5

**TABLE 1.2 Continued**

| | Percentage of Total |
|---|---|
| **Occupation** (N = 528) | |
| Traditional professional | 22.2 |
| Semi-professional | 16.9 |
| Business owner | 24.6 |
| Manager | 11.2 |
| White collar | 14.6 |
| Skilled blue collar | 9.5 |
| Semiskilled blue collar | 1.1 |
| **Education** (N = 562) | |
| Grade school or less | 5.9 |
| Not finish high school | 2.7 |
| High school | 24.4 |
| Some college/business school | 19.4 |
| College | 23.0 |
| Graduate or professional school | 24.7 |
| **Income** (N = 471) | |
| 0-19,999 | 15.0 |
| 20,000-29,999 | 10.4 |
| 30,000-39,999 | 12.7 |
| 40,000-49,999 | 15.3 |
| 50,000-59,999 | 10.2 |
| 60,000-69,999 | 7.4 |
| 70,000-79,999 | 5.3 |
| 80,000-89,999 | 4.0 |
| 90,000-99,999 | 1.0 |
| 100,000 + | 17.6 |

| | Percentage of Total |
|---|---|
| **Year of Arrival in U.S.** (N = 232) | |
| To 1924 | 16.8 |
| 1925-1929 | 4.7 |
| 1930-1939 | 4.7 |
| 1940-1949 | 8.6 |
| 1950-1959 | 12.9 |
| 1960-1964 | 11.2 |
| 1965-1969 | 19.8 |
| 1970-1979 | 18.1 |
| 1980-1986 | 3.0 |
| **Religion** (N = 576) | |
| Apostolic Armenians | 64.2 |
| Protestant Armenians | 9.7 |
| Catholic Armenians | 3.8 |
| "Other" denominations | 16.0 |
| No religion | 6.3 |
| **Symparty** (N = 584) | |
| Hunchag sympathizers | 1.0 |
| Ramgavar sympathizers | 4.8 |
| Tashnag sympathizers | 18.7 |
| *Chezok* (neutral/nonpartisan) | 24.5 |
| Indifferent to ethnic politics | 30.3 |
| Reject ethnic political parties | 12.2 |
| No answer | 8.6 |

percent were foreign-born. This figure corresponds with the estimate of the 1980 census for foreign-born Armenians in the United Sates reported above (40 percent).

While most of the early immigrants were born in Ottoman Turkey, the largest proportion of those who came in recent decades were from the Middle East (38.8 percent of foreign-born). More specifically, 13.8 percent of the foreign-born came from Lebanon, 12.5 percent from Iran, 8.6 percent from Syria, 6.9 percent from Egypt and the rest from Iraq and Palestine/Israel. Another 10 percent of the foreign-born in the sample came from Eastern European countries, mainly Bulgaria and Romania, and the rest from such diverse places as Greece, France, Germany, Cuba, and Argentina. There were twenty-three respondents in the study (3.9 percent of the total sample) who were sponsored by ANCHA. It is interesting to note that as many foreign-born Armenians settled in the United States in the two decades since the liberation of the quota system (41 percent of the foreign-born sample) as they did in the four decades (1925-1964) when the quota system was in effect (42 percent). The impact of the post-World War II Armenian immigration (65.1 percent of the foreign-born sample, and 25.9 percent of the total sample) on Armenian-American communal structures is demonstrated throughout this study.

The majority of the respondents in this study (65 percent) were affiliated with the Armenian Apostolic church. The next biggest group (16 percent) were those people of ethnic descent who have left ethnic churches to become members of other nonethnic mainstream denominations; of these, close to 11 percent belonged to varied Protestant denominations, mostly Presbyterian (3.5 percent) and Episcopalian congregations (2.3 percent); the remaining 3 percent belonged to the Roman Catholic church. Armenian Protestants made up almost 10 percent of the sample,[63] while the Armenian Catholics about 4 percent.[64] Finally, about 7 percent of respondents said they had "no religion."

The socioeconomic attributes of this sample are surprisingly high. Twenty-three percent of the respondents graduated from college and almost 25 percent went to graduate or professional school. These figures are more than twice the U.S. average. According to the 1980 census, 21 percent of white males and 14 percent of white females completed college or more (Population Reference Bureau 1982, 34).

On the other hand, this sample is closer to the national average of American Jews; 59 percent of Jewish men and 47 percent of Jewish women have at least a college degree (quoted in Friedman 1989). Almost 60 percent of the sample occupy the three highest occupational categories—traditional professional, semiprofessional, and business owner. Nearly 80 percent of respondents declared their family income;[65] of these about 60 percent earn $40,000 or more per year, with almost 18 percent in the $100,000 or more income bracket.[66]

It is possible that these income levels have been inflated in reporting. As financial success is greatly valued in American society, those respondents earning higher incomes were proud to show off their achievements. Thus, it might be postulated that those respondents who did not declare their incomes in the survey (19.3 percent) are more likely to fall into the less prosperous income brackets. These results lend support to Ronald Stockton's hypothesis that the increasingly affluent upper-middle-class status of American-Armenians risks alienating working-class people of Armenian descent. He explains; "Armenian is what individual Armenians are. Even more, it is what those most influential Armenians are, for it is they who define Armenianness by controlling the organized structures through which Armenian individuals manifest their collective identity" (1983, 12).

The basic assumption behind this hypothesis is that upper-middle-class American-Armenians will want to control ethnic voluntary associations, churches and the like. This is the opposite of classical ethnicity theory that assumes that with increased socioeconomic status, people of immigrant descent assimilate into mainstream America, leaving such communal structures behind to the working-class ethnics. I suggest that Stockton's argument applies to the first and second generations, while the classical interpretation is true of later generations.

Seventy percent of the sample were married or remarried, 10 percent widowed and 5 percent divorced. It is interesting to note that 35.9 percent of the married, 15.2 percent of the widowed, and 55.6 percent of the separated/divorced had been married to non-Armenians. On the other hand, 4.3 percent of foreign-born, 5.4 percent of second-generation, and 9.5 percent of later generations over forty years of age were divorced and separated. Given these two pieces of data it is not

possible to conclude that intermarriage increases the chances of separation and divorce, though the relationship certainly warrants further investigation. There is conflicting evidence in literature on the issue (see Cretser and Leon 1982, 10).

In spite of the efforts made to draw equal numbers of men and women of Armenian descent into the sample, slightly more men than women answered the questionnaire (45.5 percent versus 54.5 percent respectively), especially those comprising the Snowball Sample (59 percent were men). Women who marry out of their ethnic group and adopt their husband's family name are more likely to "disappear" from ethnic mailing lists, unless they remain active in ethnic associations. In addition, men who retain the "ian" ending in their family names are more readily traceable whether they marry Armenians or non-Armenians, and whether or not they participate in community activities. I cannot draw any conclusions from the available evidence on whether ethnic identity is transmitted patrilineally or matrilineally. In the United States (and traditional Armenian culture), children tend to take the family name of their fathers, but that does not mean that fathers are more successful in propagating their ethnic heritage.

It is interesting to note that gender differences were insignificant in this sample in almost every correlational matrix.[67] A survey on the assimilation of Italian-Americans in Bridgeport (CT) made a similar discovery (Crispino 1980). However, in 1958, Spindler and Spindler had found that immigrant women do not encounter the sharply disjunctive role expectations that men do. They argue that women continue to play feminine expressive roles and their position is more flexible. Similarly in a study of the integration of Armenians in Lebanon, Sona Jerejian (1976) in the 1970s found that women were more family bound and less integrated in the larger society.

It may be that surveys are inappropriate for teasing out subtle meanings in men's and women's ethnicity. Contradictory evidence comes from Micaela di Leonardo (1984) who used participant observation to study Italian-Americans in San Francisco. She suggests that men's ethnicity is manifested primarily through the nurturance and symbolically laden environment that women create. Through the celebration of holidays among kin and friends, women recreate materially and symbolically, time and time again what is perceived to be the perpetuation of ethnicity.

Di Leonardo argues that in negotiating their ethnic identities, ethnic women (compared to nonethnic American women) "must face ... an idealized patriarchal past in which women stayed at home and served men and children" (di Leonardo 1984, 228). She goes on to say that ethnic men lay claim to their own ethnicity through the "work of kinship" that mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters perform. Work of kinship implies telephoning family members, keeping the network informed of each others' activities, writing letters, sending birthday cards, buying Christmas presents, planning and cooking holiday meals for the whole family, and taking care of elderly parents and in-laws. Women cannot escape the work of kinship without feeling guilty or having a sense of failure. Therefore, ethnic women more than ethnic men have the added burden to live up to the idealized standards of their family and ethnicity.

Tables 1.3 to 1.10 show the distribution of selected background variables by generations in America. Together, these tables indicate that later-generation respondents in the sample tend to be young, still single, the offspring of intermarried couples, affiliated with non-Armenian churches or declare "no religion," and indifferent to Armenian political ideologies. They are also more likely to have gone to college, even graduate school, be employed in professional occupations, and earn above average incomes.

**TABLE 1.3**
**Frequency Distribution of Age by Generation**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 584 | (219) | (272) | (36) | (41) | (16) |
| 20-29 | 4.1 | 2.2 | 5.6 | 24.4 | 31.1 |
| 30-39 | 11.4 | 3.3 | 27.8 | 41.5 | 43.8 |
| 40-49 | 18.7 | 11.4 | 44.4 | 17.1 | 25.0 |
| 50-59 | 21.5 | 37.9 | 19.4 | 14.6 | 0.0 |
| 60-69 | 18.3 | 30.1 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| 70 + | 26.0 | 15.1 | 2.8 | 2.4 | 0.0 |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

TABLE 1.4
Frequency Distribution of Religion by Generation

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 576 | (215) | (270) | (35) | (41) | (15) |
| Arm. Apostolic | 76.3 | 60.4 | 68.6 | 39.0 | 20.0 |
| Arm. Protestant | 12.6 | 8.9 | 2.9 | 9.8 | 0.0 |
| Arm. Catholic | 5.1 | 3.0 | 0.0 | 7.3 | 0.0 |
| Other | 5.1 | 21.5 | 14.3 | 19.5 | 66.7 |
| No religion | 0.9 | 6.3 | 14.3 | 24.4 | 13.3 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

TABLE 1.5
Frequency Distribution of Ancestry by Generation

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 584 | (219) | (272) | (36) | (41) | (16) |
| 2 Parents Arm. | 90.9 | 93.9 | 86.1 | 75.6 | 12.5 |
| 1 Parent Arm. | 9.1 | 6.3 | 13.9 | 24.4 | 87.5 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

TABLE 1.6
Frequency Distribution of Sympathy to Armenian Political Parties and Ideologies by Generation

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 584 | (219) | (272) | (36) | (41) | (16) |
| Hunchag | 1.4 | 1.1 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Ramgavar | 5.5 | 5.5 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 6.3 |
| Tashnag | 27.9 | 15.1 | 13.9 | 4.9 | 0.0 |
| Neutral *(Chezok)* | 33.3 | 22.8 | 11.1 | 7.3 | 6.3 |
| Indifferent | 12.8 | 36.0 | 44.4 | 65.9 | 50.0 |
| Rejects all parties | 10.5 | 11.0 | 22.2 | 14.6 | 25.0 |
| (No answer) | 8.7 | 8.5 | 8.3 | 7.3 | 12.5 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Interestingly, occupation and income are not statistically related to generation. These figures question the general assumption in assimilation theory about the correlation of social class variables and generational presence in the United States. The hypothesis that ethnicity varies inversely with socioeconomic status is only valid for educational attainment, not occupation and income (see tables 1.9 and 1.10). That is, the later the generational standing, the higher the educational level completed, but there is no commensurate increase in occupational prestige and income levels. Foreign-born respondents

**TABLE 1.7**
**Frequency Distribution of Education by Generation**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 563 | (204) | (266) | (36) | (41) | (15) |
| Grade school or less | 13.7 | 1.9 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Some high school | 2.9 | 3.0 | 0.0 | 2.4 | 0.0 |
| High school | 26.5 | 28.2 | 11.1 | 12.2 | 0.0 |
| Some college | 15.7 | 24.1 | 19.4 | 7.3 | 18.8 |
| College | 21.1 | 19.2 | 41.7 | 36.6 | 31.3 |
| More than college | 20.1 | 23.7 | 27.8 | 41.5 | 50.0 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

**TABLE 1.8**
**Frequency Distribution of Marital Status by Generation**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 584 | (219) | (272) | (36) | (41) | (16) |
| Not married | 9.1 | 13.6 | 16.7 | 34.1 | 56.3 |
| Married | 73.1 | 70.2 | 75.0 | 58.5 | 43.8 |
| Widowed | 14.2 | 10.3 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Divorced/ separated | 3.7 | 5.9 | 8.3 | 7.3 | 0.0 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

were as likely as third- and fourth-generation respondents to earn high incomes and hold upper-echelon jobs, even when their age was held constant.

Religion is also an important variable in explaining assimilation. Respondents categorized as "other" (i.e., they were affiliated with non-Armenian churches) or "no religion" in the survey were, on average, the most assimilated. First, non-Armenian religious affiliations tended to increase with generational presence (.18*; see table 1.4). Second, the higher the likelihood of a respondent to declare "other" or "no religion," the higher his or her chances to be indifferent to Armenian political ideologies (.21*; see table 1.11). Third, non-Armenian church affiliations considerably increased the chances of mixed ancestry (.18*; see table 1.12). This leads me to infer that mixed ancestry affects assimilation through religion. That is, children of mixed marriages are more likely to be lost to Armenian churches because they follow the faith of their non-Armenian parent or no

**TABLE 1.9**
**Frequency Distribution of Occupation by Generation**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 570 | (210) | (267) | (36) | (41) | (16) |
| Traditional prof. | 18.6 | 19.1 | 25.0 | 34.1 | 25.0 |
| Semiprofes-sional | 11.4 | 15.4 | 25.0 | 26.8 | 25.0 |
| Business owner | 29.0 | 21.0 | 25.0 | 4.9 | 12.5 |
| Manager | 9.0 | 10.5 | 13.9 | 12.2 | 12.5 |
| White collar | 7.1 | 20.2 | 5.6 | 12.2 | 6.3 |
| Skilled blue-collar | 14.3 | 6.7 | 0.0 | 2.4 | 6.3 |
| Semiskilled blue-coll. | 1.4 | 1.1 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| (Homemaker) | 8.1 | 5.2 | 5.6 | 4.9 | 0.0 |
| (Student) | 1.0 | 0.7 | 0.0 | 2.4 | 12.5 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

religion than simply because they had a nonethnic parent. This is a hypothesis that needs to be tested in the future.

In addition to generational effects, there are cohort effects that seem to influence behavior. Younger respondents, irrespective of generation, were more likely to have higher levels of educational attainment, earn higher incomes, have a non-Armenian parent, and to hold prestigious occupational positions. These cohort effects are also observed between generation and education when age is controlled. Irrespective of generational differences, none of the twenty to twenty-nine year olds in the sample stopped with a high school diploma. For the thirties cohort, fully 50 percent of the foreign-born had a college degree or more. This figure increases to 78 percent for the second generation and 85 percent for later generations. There is also a

**TABLE 1.10**
**Frequency Distribution of Income (in U.S. $) by Generation**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 471 | (176) | (209) | (35) | (35) | (16) |
| 0-19,999 | 18.8 | 14.4 | 0.0 | 14.3 | 18.8 |
| 20,000-29,999 | 9.7 | 11.5 | 11.4 | 8.6 | 6.3 |
| 30,000-39,999 | 13.6 | 12.9 | 0.0 | 20.0 | 12.5 |
| 40,000-49,999 | 12.5 | 15.3 | 31.4 | 17.1 | 6.3 |
| 50,000-59,999 | 12.5 | 10.5 | 2.9 | 8.6 | 0.0 |
| 60,000-69,999 | 4.5 | 10.5 | 5.7 | 5.7 | 6.3 |
| 70,000-79,999 | 6.8 | 2.4 | 14.3 | 5.7 | 6.3 |
| 80,000-89,999 | 1.7 | 4.8 | 11.4 | 2.9 | 6.3 |
| 90,000-99,999 | 3.4 | 1.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 6.3 |
| 100,000 + | 16.5 | 16.7 | 22.9 | 17.1 | 31.3 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

generational increase in those who obtained a college degree or more for forty to forty-nine year olds (41 percent of first generation, 58 of second, 74 percent of third and 100 percent for fourth generation).

The differences are less marked for those in their fifties, but there is still a small generational increase in higher education from 44 percent in first generation, to 51 percent in second, to 54 percent in the third generation. The situation changes for the sixties and seventies cohorts. Here, the foreign-born have more college education than the second generation. For those between age sixty and sixty-nine, while 53 percent of the immigrant generation had a college degree or more, 32 percent of the second generation did. Again for those above age seventy, 22 percent of the foreign-born had higher education in contrast to 17 percent of second generation.

In sum, only respondents in their thirties and forties, the (American) baby boom cohort do better educationally than the foreign-born. For those born sixty or seventy years ago, there is even a reversal. This reflects the cohort effects in the history of American-Armenians. Respondents who grew up in the 1920s and the Great Depression were severely handicapped in terms of educational attainment. Starting with the outbreak of World War II and afterward, Armenian parents in the United States pushed their children to go to college and professional

**TABLE 1.11**
**Frequency Distribution of Sympathy to Armenian Political Parties and Ideologies by Religious Affiliation**

| | Apostolic Armenian | Protestant Armenian | Catholic Armenian | Other (Non-Arm.) | No Religion |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 584 | (370) | (56) | (22) | (92) | (36) |
| Hunchag | 1.1 | 0.0 | 4.5 | 1.1 | 0.0 |
| Ramgavar | 6.2 | 5.4 | 0.0 | 1.1 | 0.0 |
| Tashnag | 25.4 | 7.1 | 0.0 | 7.6 | 2.8 |
| Neutral | 29.7 | 23.3 | 27.3 | 9.8 | 11.1 |
| Indifferent | 19.5 | 37.5 | 45.5 | 54.3 | 63.9 |
| Rejects all parties | 9.7 | 12.5 | 18.2 | 17.4 | 16.7 |
| (No answer) | 8.4 | 14.3 | 4.5 | 8.7 | 5.6 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

schools. By then, it was easier to do so, besides they were not unique. Jews, Italians, and others of the "new" immigration did likewise (e.g., Alba 1985a, Cohen 1983).

When the educational attainment of the respondents is examined by their place of birth, holding constant their age, an interesting phenomenon is found. All younger cohorts show larger proportions of college and graduate school education, but the proportional increase is the least for those born in Turkey. For example, about 54 percent of respondents over sixty years of age who were born in Turkey have a high school diploma or less, dropping to 33 percent for thirty year olds. By contrast, the decrease for Armenians born in the Middle East is from about 80 percent for those over sixty to 30 percent for those in their thirties. The biggest drop is for U.S.-born respondents, from 54 percent to 12 percent for the same cohorts. This implies that the United States has been most conducive to educational attainment for Armenians in the last fifty-year-period. Those born in Turkey after the Genocide have had less of an opportunity to go to college. In between are those born in Middle Eastern countries.

Business ownership is the avenue for upward mobility and integration into the American economy for most Armenian immigrants. Nearly 30 percent of the entire sample said they were self-employed. Interestingly, there were no differences in self-employment between the Main Sample and the Snowball Sample in spite of the younger more assimilated profile of the latter. Several occupations have been popular with Armenians especially among the first and second generations. These are the (Oriental) rug business and

**TABLE 1.12**
**Frequency Distribution of Religion by Ancestry**

| | Both Parents Armenian | One Parent Armenian |
|---|---|---|
| N = 576 | (513) | (63) |
| Armenian Apostolic | 69.0 | 25.4 |
| Armenian Protestant | 9.6 | 11.1 |
| Armenian Catholic | 2.9 | 11.1 |
| Other denominations | 13.5 | 36.5 |
| No religion | 5.1 | 15.9 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 |

repairs, laundry and dry cleaning business, tailoring and dressmaking, and photoengraving. Mirak (1983) corroborates that Armenians in New York City became tailors, rug merchants, grocers, and dry cleaners. At the present time, Armenian immigrants, especially those from Turkey, tend to enter the jewelry business and a small enclave economy has developed in the Diamond District on Forty-seventh Street in Manhattan.

The U.S. census (1980) indicates that Armenians are overrepresented along with other historic middlemen minorities (i.e., Jews, Lebanese, Greeks) in small-business ownership (Waldinger and Aldrich 1990, 54-55). The business participation rates[68] of the fifty

**TABLE 1.13**
**Frequency Distribution of Age by Place of Birth of Foreign-Born Respondents**

| | Turkey | Middle East | Soviet Bloc | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 233 | (90) | (110) | (22) | (11) |
| 20-29 | 3.3 | 6.4 | 4.5 | 0.0 |
| 30-39 | 6.7 | 17.3 | 4.5 | 0.0 |
| 40-49 | 5.6 | 27.3 | 22.7 | 9.1 |
| 50-59 | 6.7 | 25.5 | 40.9 | 45.5 |
| 60-69 | 28.9 | 13.6 | 13.6 | 18.2 |
| 70 + | 48.9 | 10.0 | 13.6 | 27.3 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

**TABLE 1.14**
**Frequency Distribution of Education by Place of Birth**

| | U.S.A. | Turkey | Middle East | Soviet Bloc | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 563 | (346) | (86) | (100) | (20) | (11) |
| Some high school | 3.8 | 29.1 | 8.0 | 10.0 | 0.0 |
| High school | 22.8 | 23.3 | 30.0 | 25.0 | 36.4 |
| Some college | 22.5 | 11.6 | 15.0 | 15.0 | 27.3 |
| College | 23.4 | 17.4 | 27.0 | 20.0 | 18.2 |
| More than college | 27.5 | 18.6 | 20.0 | 30.0 | 18.2 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

largest U.S. ancestry groups rank Armenians sixth at 94.5 (after Russian Jews at 117.4; Lebanese 106.6; Romanians at 104.3; Swiss at 104.2; and Greeks at 94.9). They are almost double the national average (48.9). In addition, self-employed Armenians rank thirteenth on mean income at $21,430 (average being $18,630).

In this sample, 1.4 percent of the respondents were in the rug business, 7.4 percent of their fathers and 2.7 percent of their spouse's fathers were in that business. Another 2.6 percent of the respondents were tailors, as were 6.7 percent of their mothers and fathers. A little over 1 percent of the respondents were in the jewelry business, together with 2.7 percent of their fathers, and 1.2 percent of their spouse's fathers. Three percent of our respondents were in the photoengraving business,[69] as were 7.5 percent of their fathers, 2.7 percent of their spouses, and 3.9 percent of their spouse's fathers.

Several respondents commented on being apprenticed with other Armenian photoengravers and being active in the union. A 63-year-old second-generation man describes:

> [My father] came to the City [New York] and obtained a job in a photo-engraving shop owned by Armenians. He became a member of the Photo-engraving Union. This was an important event for him. For the rest of his life he earned good union wages. He was a skilled etcher and was able to hold his job through the Great Depression. Those Armenians who now disparage unions should know that it was Photo-engravers Union wages that helped support the churches and other organizations in those years. Many Armenians obtained their college education

**TABLE 1.15**
**Frequency Distribution of Occupation by Place of Birth**

| | Turkey | Middle East | Soviet Bloc | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 223 | (89) | (102) | (21) | (11) |
| Traditional Prof. | 21.3 | 15.7 | 23.8 | 9.1 |
| Semiprofessional | 9.0 | 13.7 | 4.8 | 18.2 |
| Business owner | 33.7 | 28.4 | 23.8 | 9.1 |
| Manager | 3.4 | 13.7 | 4.8 | 9.1 |
| White collar | 5.6 | 8.8 | 4.8 | 9.1 |
| Skilled blue-collar | 15.7 | 8.8 | 19.0 | 36.4 |
| Semiskilled blue-coll. | 2.2 | 1.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Homemaker | 9.0 | 7.8 | 14.3 | 9.1 |
| Student | 0.0 | 2.0 | 4.8 | 0.0 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

> because of their fathers' union wages. That was the case for my brother ... and I ... I attended ... [technical school] then entered photo-engraving (stripper). My other brother ... also became a photo-engraver (finisher). [Brother] and I were able to enter the Union apprenticeship because our father was a member.

All this leads me to postulate that self-employment is an "ethnic" trait. The experience of Armenian immigrants in New York and New Jersey, whether in the past or at present, fits to some extent the "middlemen minority form" discussed above. I will argue this point further in chapter 3.

The survey supports the claim that Armenian immigrants to the United States who arrived after World War II had more resources than the earlier immigration wave. Tables 1.13 to 1.15 show the distribution of foreign-born respondents' place of birth with age, education, and occupation. The oldest immigrants came from Turkey after the Genocide, 77.8 percent are over age sixty. They also tend to be the least educated, 29 percent have not finished high school, compared to 8 percent for immigrants from the Middle East. Turkish-born respondents also tend to occupy blue-collar jobs more often, 17.9 percent compared to 9.8 percent for Middle Eastern-born respondents. This can be explained by the deportations, massacres, and general instability of Armenian lives in Turkey at the beginning of this century. Although respondents born in Soviet Bloc countries tend to have higher educational attainment than those born in Turkey, the former tend to predominate in blue-collar jobs.

A caveat is in order here. The *embourgeoisement* of Armenian-Americans should not be overrated, or too rosy a picture be painted of their success story. Surveys often miss those who did not "make it" in the system. The American Dream has eluded many who continue to live modestly, not for lack of trying. Often physical and mental illness, absence of or inappropriate skills and resources, even bad luck prevent families from attaining their goals. The meteoric ascent of a few Armenian-Americans and their national prominence in business, professions, politics, and so on overshadows the painful and hard-earned achievement, in small increments, of the majority.

The evidence provided by the sample of 584 men and women of Armenian descent living in metropolitan New York and New Jersey confirms the general events in Armenian history and the major trends

in U.S. immigration. It also supports the discussion on settlement of immigrant groups and their struggle for the American Dream. The assumptions of this study on assimilation and ethnic maintenance are borne out. The demographic profile of Armenian-Americans reveals that they are mostly middle-aged, predominantly from the first and second generation, about two-thirds have more than a high school diploma, and earn over $40,000 annually and are employed in professional occupations or are business owners. About two-thirds are affiliated with the Armenian Apostolic church, but about one fifth have left ethnic churches to join other nonethnic denominations or are not interested in organized religion. In the chapters that follow, I will describe "typical" patterns of behavior of Armenian-Americans and their ways of experiencing their Armenianness. I will also explain how they have, individually and collectively, created and perpetuated an Armenian subculture in the United States of America. I begin with the cornerstones of this subculture; the church and politics.

## Notes

1. For example, Ferro and Mouradian (1982, 560) talk about "hantise de l'assimilation."
2. Several respondents in the study were reminded of the parallels, such as a young foreign-born professional woman who wrote: "Turks massacred us physically . . . [assimilation] is massacre emotionally, 'white' vs. 'red.'" Contemporary analysis of diasporan communities almost invariably allude to "jermag chart" (white massacre). See Pattie (1990, 26), Ordjanian (1991, 233) among others.
3. American Jews are often cited as a model of ethnic resilience because of their unique cultural and religious heritage. Armenians compare themselves to Jews because of several parallels in their history and culture, and hope to match their alleged ethnic cohesion and steadfastness. It is interesting, however, that the unassimilability of American Jews has been demonstrated to be more of a myth than an empirical fact (see e.g., Cohen 1983; Gans 1979; Steinberg 1981; Thernstrom 1982, 19). The results of a mid-1990 telephone survey of 2,441 households in which at least one person was Jewish or of Jewish heritage sponsored by the Council of Jewish Federation are similar to the findings of this study on Armenian-Americans. The survey indicated that in 43 percent of marriages after 1985 Jews married Jews, this is compared to 89 percent before 1965. Also, 31 percent of children under eighteen in mixed households grow up with no religion, 41 percent in other religions and only 28 percent are raised Jewish. See Ari L. Goldman, "Poll Shows Jews Both Assimilate and Keep Tradition," *New York Times*, 7 June 1991, p. A 14.
4. Even the ethnic press has reiterated the need for research, e.g. see Vartan Oskanian, "Research is Needed to Enhance our Knowledge about Ourselves,"

*Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, 15 February 1986, p. 2. Some of the most significant empirical studies in the social sciences on Armenian-Americans in chronological order are: LaPiere 1930; Warner and Srole 1945; Treudley 1946; Nelson 1953; Atamian 1955; Kernaklian 1967; Henry 1973; Phillips 1978; O'Grady 1979; Rustigian 1979; Der-Karabetian 1980; Davidian 1986; Takooshian 1986-87; Bakalian 1989; Der-Martirosian 1989; Ordjanian 1991; see Bakalian 1985 for other references.

5. Armenians in Turkey were systematically discriminated against by the Turkish government. For example, the Armenian National Council (*azkayin joghov* ) was outlawed in 1939, the Capital Tax of 1942 makes commercial and industrial ventures almost impossible, other laws required official permission to whitewash Armenian schools; Armenian history, including the Genocide, could not be taught in Armenian classrooms, and most forms of intimidation and harassment possible in civilian life were practiced against them. Most significantly, the violent demonstrations and looting of non-Muslim stores on 6 September 1955 stands out in the memory of the *Bolcetzi* as a frightening experience that could be repeated in the future (see Walker 1980, 372). It should be noted that up until the early 1960s, Istanbul had a viable Armenian community, a sizable professional and business class, an intelligentsia publishing literature and poetry and active in the local press. However, most of the college-educated *Bolcetzi* started emigrating as early as the 1950s. They were later followed by the rest of the population and those born in mainland Turkey.
6. Kevork Imirzian, "Armenians of Istanbul: As the Once-vibrant Community Turns Increasingly Pale, the Struggle for Survival Continues in the face of Adversity, Attrition and Assimilation," *Armenian International Magazine*, November 1990, pp. 18-21.
7. Both the national press and the ethnic press have repeatedly reported on Soviet immigration to the United States, for example, see *New York Times*, 6 December 1987, p. 1; *Armenian Reporter*, 26 November 1987.
8. See also Sidney Heitman, "Parallels and Differences between Jewish, German, and Armenian Emigration from the Soviet Union," *Armenian Reporter*, 15 May 1986, p. 3; and "German and Armenian Emigration from the USSR," *Armenian Reporter*, 14 August 1986, p. 2.
9. This information was supplied to me during my visit to Los Angeles in April 1990 by knowledgeable informants active in refugee rehabilitation services.
10. This information was corroborated by Mr. Suren Saroyan, president of ANCHA, during my interview with him in New York City in 1984, and the late Mrs. Arpi Papazian, an active committee member in the New York area.
11. The evidence is sketchy but the trend is clear. According to the 1980 U.S. census, 10 percent of foreign-born Armenian males have a four-year college degree and an additional 16.3 percent have completed graduate studies (of those born in Iran, 17.4 percent have a college education, and 24.6 percent professional education; of those born in Lebanon the figures are 9.6 percent and 15 percent respectively). For foreign-born females the proportions are lower, 7.9 percent have college and 7.4 percent more than college. The 1980 U.S. census also indicates that 26.6 percent of foreign-born males and 20.6 percent of foreign-born females have executive and professional occupations [comparable rates for American-born Armenians are 36.7 percent for males and 30.3 percent for females]. In a survey of 195 Iranian Armenian heads of households in Los Angeles (71 percent male),

16.9 percent had a college degree and 16.4 percent had professional or graduate training. Of these, 29.4 percent were employed in managerial and executive positions and 18.2 percent had a professional specialty (Sabagh, Bozorgmehr, Light, and Der-Martirosian 1989). In a 1989 survey of Armenian-American population of Pasadena (Los Angeles) found that 83 percent of residents were foreign-born, 11 percent had a college degree, 3.9 percent a masters degree and 2 percent a doctorate. The annual average income was $39,000 and 52.9 percent of sample owned their homes (S.C. Communications Group. *The Armenian-American Population in Pasadena: A 1989 Survey* [Whittier, CA, photocopied]; see also Vicki Torres, "Armenian Population Smaller than Pasadena Survey Expected," *Los Angeles Times*, 5 April 1990.

12. It should be noted; however, that in 1980, the U.S. census reported only 212,621 Americans of Armenian origin; a count based upon self-described cultural ancestry (Takooshian 1986-87).
13. According to one unpublished report (Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations, "Impact of Soviet Armenian Immigration on Los Angeles County," report by Bobbi Kimble, 1989), 90-95 percent of Soviet Armenian refugees settle in Los Angeles. An estimated 200,000 residents of Los Angeles are of Armenian origin. Heavy influx of recent immigrants from Soviet Armenia and the Middle East (see Takooshian 1986-87) in the last decade or so have changed the character of the Los Angeles Armenian community. The incoming Soviet Armenian refugees and other Armenian immigrants have received widespread ethnic, local, and national coverage. For example see Pierre Papazian "From Bourj-Hammoud to Hollywood or 'To Live & Die in Los Angeles,'" *Armenian Reporter*, 19 February 1987, pp. 2, 4; *Daily News - L.A. Life*, 19 April 1987; reprinted in *Armenian Reporter*, 14 May and 28 May 1987; *New York Times*, 19 May 1988.
14. This figure is from the Public Use Microdata Sample File (5 percent) of the U.S. census.
15. The 1989 Pasadena Armenian-American population survey corroborates that only 17 percent of residents were American-born, 33 percent were born in Lebanon, 15.6 percent born in Armenia, 12 percent born in Syria, 8 percent born in Turkey, 3.5 percent born in Egypt, etc. The average number of years in the United States was 12.3. Armenians in Pasadena make up 5.16 percent of the city's estimated 13,250 residents.
16. Indeed, the census figures undercount the estimates of Armenian-Americans. For example, according to one authority on the matter, in 1970 there were about 65,000 Armenians in Southern California, especially the greater Los Angeles area (Avakian 1977a, 49). Surely by 1980, the number must have increased with all the immigration from the Middle East and Soviet Union.
17. Several respondents in the survey described their experiences of New York City, such as the seventy-six-year-old second-generation man who wrote: "Born and lived on the East side of Manhattan. In the apt we lived 22 out of 24 were Armenian."
18. Middle Eastern Armenians trying to obtain visas for the United States appear to wait out their hopes in Europe, in spite of major hardships. See article by Florence Avakian "New Breed of Armenian Refugees Flock into European Countries," *Armenian Reporter*, 8 October 1987, p. 21. A recent study has revealed that about 15,000 Armenian refugees awaiting permanent settlement are

stranded in various European capitals and in India and Pakistan. Plans are under way to help them immigrate to the United States because it is believed to be their only solution for a decent future for themselves and for their children (Armenian Assembly of America, *Armenian Refugees in Western Europe: A Profile, A Challenge*, Washington, DC, March 1988).

19. It is interesting to note that public opinion and the mass media in the United States, over the last century have been consistently restrictionist on the issue of immigration. In a content analysis of the American print media between 1880 and 1980, Simon (1985) found that the press continuously communicated a desire to reduce the number of immigrants coming to the United States and advocated the exclusion of different nationalities and people at all times; the list of undesirables changing with changes in peak tides of immigration and the provenance of the immigrants. In the last couple of decades, public opinion has remained exclusionist; Simon hypothesizes that if the general public dictated immigration policies, it is unlikely that the quota laws of the 1920s and restrictive statutes of the 1950s would have changed at all. Moreover, opinion polls find poorer Americans to be most hostile toward immigration. Lower-class Americans fear the competition of new immigrants in the job market, in housing, in social services, in education and in opportunities for social mobility. Immigrants represent a threat to their livelihoods and that of their children (Simon 1985, 222). Yet, it is remarkable that against this background of hostility and opposition, over 30 million immigrants arrived in the United States during this period, among them a few hundred thousand Armenians.
20. Similarly, Zenner (1982, 458) finds that the Syrians and the Lebanese, unlike other ethnic groups such as the blacks, Japanese and Jews have not been the object of major hostility because of their relatively small numbers.
21. It should be noted that there are no specifically negative stereotypes against Armenian-Americans like those of other ethnic groups. For example, blacks are said to be lazy or drug peddlers; Jews are said to control Wall Street and the Media; the Irish are stereotyped with drunkenness; Polack jokes assume Poles are dumb, uneducated; Italians are believed to be in the Mafia, and so on (e.g., see Helmreich 1982).
22. In popular fiction, Armenians are generally stereotyped as astute, crafty merchants. For example, in James Clavell's *Noble House* (Dell, 1981, pp. 144-45) the heroine, Miss K. C. Tcholok (for Kamalian Ciranoush Tcholokian) is of Armenian descent (third-generation). She is portrayed as a skilled negotiator with an inherited sense of business acumen.
23. Presently, it is more likely that poorer Armenians, those who did not achieve upward mobility, will suffer from the stereotyping of American-Armenians. As is the case with the Jews, "today's stereotype is the well-educated Jewish [or Armenian] professional" or prosperous businessman (Rosentraub and Taebel 1980, 212; see also Stockton 1983).
24. Armenians make up only a fraction of Los Angeles County's welfare recipients. In April 1988, 4,357 Armenian families with dependent children (Soviet and others) received welfare payments; they constituted 2.2 percent of the total. In April 1990, the figure went up to 7,132 families, that is, 3.3 percent of the total (see Viken Berberian, "Coming to America," *Armenian International Magazine*, June 1991, pp. 14-21).
25. One of my informants in Los Angeles told me that some sixty Armenian-

Americans work for the welfare department servicing the thousands of Armenian refugees, and the Los Angeles county court system employs several Armenian interpreters. In Pasadena, on the other hand, only fifteen Armenians are employed by the city, they make up less than 1 percent of the 1,600-member work force (See Vicki Torres. *Los Angeles Times*, 5 April 1990).

26. Of course, most of the Soviet Armenian refugees who have settled in the United States have become hardworking, honest citizens. Some have been exceptionally lucky, achieving fame and fortune in the short time they have settled here. A magazine article that portrayed five of these success stories reveals that these people have "made it" in a variety of fields with varying educational backgrounds. One was a fifty-six-year-old engineer and computer scientist who arrived in 1966; another is the owner of eight supermarkets who came in 1969. A young thirty-six-year-old man who arrived in 1977 is a jewelry designer and wholesaler whose estimated annual sales range between $10-15 million. Another man started off driving a cab in 1980 and now owns a garment sewing business with seventy full-time employees. The only woman in the article is a scholar who arrived in 1977 and is presently writing textbooks for Armenian-American schools. See Serge Samoniantz, "Soviet Armenian Immigrants Carve Path to Success," *Armenian International Magazine*, September 1990, pp. 18-20.
27. Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations, "Impact of Soviet Armenian Immigration on Los Angeles County," (report by Bobbi Kimble, photocopied, 1989).
28. See *Armenian Reporter*, 2 March 1989.
29. In Lebanon, Armenians were stereotyped as smart, clever (in Arabic: *el Arman shatreen*).
30. For example, AGBU established a social service program in New York City in 1976 to help newcomers find jobs, housing, legal advice, and other basic needs. With additional federal funding, a program for teaching English as a second language and a six-month secretarial skills training course were also offered to all Armenians. The program was able to come to the assistance of hundreds of immigrants fleeing the political turmoil of the Middle East and the communist countries of Romania, Bulgaria and Soviet Armenia. It managed to survive initially in spite of severe opposition because of the sheer demand for help. In recent years, the program has succumbed to financial hardships caused by the belief that people should be self-sufficient and should not rely on welfare, whether it is federal, local or ethnic (see Bakalian, *Community Needs Assessment Report* [August 1988] — AGBU Social Services Program). It is noteworthy that the community press has reiterated similar views regarding the large influx of Soviet Armenian immigrants into California in 1987-89. It has been suggested that the Armenian social services programs that come to the assistance of incoming immigrants should be shut down in order to discourage further emigration from the "motherland."
31. Information supplied by Sarkis Ghazarian, director of the program in April 1990.
32. See ad in *Armenian International Magazine*, January 1991, p. 6
33. The vast majority of Eastern Armenians are presently scattered in the Soviet Diaspora, though a small number of their descendants are found in France.
34. I am indebted to Professor Nina Garsoian for pointing out these distinctions to me.
35. Even though Armenians trace their origin in the United States to the late

nineteenth century, the fourth generation of Armenian-Americans, that is the great-grandchildren of the earliest immigrant generation, is still predominantly young in age and proportionately small in size, while the foreign-born generation is relatively large because of continuing immigration. As an ethnic group, Armenian-Americans are considered relative newcomers to the United States of America when compared to the descendants of the early settlers who can enumerate at least eight generations of ancestors since independence (Gleason 1980, 56).

36. Bouvier and Gardner (1986, 9) report that before 1819, only about 250,000 immigrants settled in the United States. This is to be compared to the well over 52 million who came between 1820 and 1985.
37. It is interesting to note that an Armenian translation of Elizabeth C. Barney Buel's "American Citizenship" pamphlet was published by the Daughters of the American Revolution in Washington D.C., in 1926. An earlier version had been published in 1912.
38. For example, the idea of a melting pot was evident in the writings of J. Hector St John de Crevecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer,* published in London in 1782 (for extracts see Gordon 1964, 116; Handlin 1959, 148-49; Scott 1968, 16-19).
39. This is a rare occurrence in American society. The exceptions are: the Hutterites (see John A. Hostetler and Gertrude Enders Huntington, *The Hutterites of North America*, [New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1967]); the Amish (see John A. Hostetler, *Amish Society*, 3d ed., [Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980]); and the Hasidim (see Solomon Poll, *The Hassidic Community of Williamsburg*, [New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1962]).
40. Other scholars have used the term integration for structural assimilation (e.g. Yinger 1981).
41. Kourvetaris and Dobratz (1976) tested empirically Gordon's ethclass hypothesis among three ethnoreligious groups — Greek Orthodox, Italian Catholic, and Swedish Lutherans. They corroborate Gordon's notion that people confine primary group relations to ethclass more than would be expected by chance alone.
42. Empirical evidence in the 1960s suggested that while ethnic groups of the "new" immigration had been acculturated, the process had stopped there. There was little evidence of structural assimilation at the time (for Jews see Kramer and Leventman 1961; Rosenthal 1960; for Italians see Gans 1962). In recent studies, indicators of structural assimilation such as nonethnic friendships and marriages and participation in ethnic communal activities and events show a totally different picture. Structural assimilation is well under way (for Jews see Cohen 1983; for Italians see Alba 1985a).
43. Abner Cohen (1974) uses *de-tribalization* and *re-tribalization* to explain the same type of process in African societies.
44. Glazer and Moynihan (1975, 1) reveal that the word *ethnic* did not make its appearance in English dictionaries until the 1960s.
45. Lynn Rapaport (1989) has found that children of the Holocaust survivors who were born and continue to live in Germany today use such subjective boundary markers to identify themselves. They deny "German" identity even though they may carry German passports, speak German, and be culturally assimilated. The Holocaust overshadows their lives and mobilizes them ethnically/culturally

(rather than religiously). This is not the case of Armenians and their descendants who survived the Genocide and have remained in Turkey. Their minority status is imposed upon them by their inability to become a Turk (a Muslim).

46. Arlene Avakian argues the same point in an editorial of a "feminist issue" of the literary magazine *Ararat*. She writes: "If people who do live outside the community identify as Armenians, does anyone have the right to question that self-identification? As a person who is the child and grandchild of survivors of the genocide, whose first language was Armenian and who was raised within the Armenian community, who has never chosen to be part of that community as an adult, but who presently identifies her Armenianness as central to her identity, I must argue that I am as 'real' an Armenian woman as anyone else" (1988, 4).
47. It should be noted that this definition does not include spouses of non-Armenian descent. In this survey, one completed questionnaire filled-out by a non-Armenian spouse was excluded from analysis.
48. In Armenian, the suffix *tzi* at the end of place names implies provenance, such as *Hayastantzi* (Soviet Armenian), *Bolcetzi* (Istanbul Armenian), *Haleptzi* (Aleppo Armenian).
49. Generation has been categorized in this study as follows: first, foreign-born respondent (except those who arrived at or below the age of six) also first generation or immigrant generation; second, U.S.-born respondent of foreign-born parents (includes those who arrived at or before age six) or second generation; third, respondent and one parent U.S.-born; fourth, respondent and both parents U.S.-born, or third generation; fifth, respondent, both parents and at least one grandparent U.S.-born, or fourth generation. Finally, the term *later-generation* is used to denote respondents with one or more U.S.-born parent(s) and grandparent(s). The rationale for including children under six years of age not born in the United States with the second generation is attributed to the power of the (public) school system and mass media in acculturation.
50. The country of birth of the foreign-born were grouped into: Turkey, Middle East, Soviet Bloc, and Other.
51. Religion has been classified into: Armenian Apostolic church, Armenian Protestant church, Armenian Catholic church, "other," and "no religion."
52. Ancestry is a dichotomous variable that measures the ethnic origins of the respondent's parents: both Armenian or mixed ancestry.
53. Variable Symparty was classified as follows: Hunchag, Tashnag, Neutral, Indifferent, and Rejects Parties. The differences between these nominal values are explained in the next chapter.
54. As I will describe in the next chapter, the Armenian Apostolic church in the United States and the diaspora is administered by two separate Sees or jurisdictions because of historical and political circumstances. Bitter conflict and animosity characterizes the relationship between the two. Since most Apostolics in North America choose to become members in churches affiliated with either the See of Echmiadzin or the See of Cilicia, it was essential to obtain both mailing lists from both sides.
55. Several organizations' mailing lists were also obtained, but these were not used (with one exception) because they were not comprehensive enough. The (Apostolic) master lists already included most of their addresses. One voluntary association's president had read about my research in the ethnic press and volunteered to send me their mailing list. Twenty names were sampled from it

and were included in the Main Sample. These tended to be more recent immigrants from the Middle East whose names were less likely to appear on the master lists.

56. Nineteen households in the Main Sample were not of Armenian descent. They had been put on the lists because their name ended with "ian" or they had attended a concert in an Armenian church or hall or some similar reason. Thirty-nine envelopes were returned by the post office, the time limitation for forwarding mail having expired, or the addressee having passed away. Six questionnaires were excluded from analysis because they were incomplete and the identification number had been torn off, making it impossible to call the respondent and complete the questionnaire.
57. According to Warner and Srole the "term *ethnic* refers to any individual who considers himself, or is considered to be, a member of a group with a foreign culture and who participates in the activities of the group" (1945, 28). In popular speech the word *ethnic* sometimes tends to have pejorative connotations. Here, I use the word *ethnic* more liberally, meaning simply people of ethnic descent who acknowledge their immigrant roots, irrespective of community participation.
58. For example, Chichekian (1987) finds that linguistic assimilation of Armenians in Canada depends first, on size of the ethnic community, second, on institutional completeness. Thus, Montreal and Toronto have the highest linguistic retention rates in Canada.
59. Robert Merton's (1972) analysis of insiders and outsiders in conducting research is relevant to my role in this study. I was born and raised as an Armenian in Beirut, Lebanon. Both my parents and grandparents were of Armenian stock from ancient Caesarea (Kayseri) in Turkey. My upbringing in Lebanon was atypical of most Lebanese-born Armenians. My Armenian identity was ascribed by the sociopolitical conditions of Lebanese society. As I was not sent to an Armenian day school, and as we did not live in an Armenian neighborhood, I was structurally removed from a more traditionally ethnic socialization. Consequently, even though my parents' primary relations were mostly with fellow Armenians, my own friends (personal network) were predominantly non-Armenian. Jerejian (1976), who studied differences between Lebanese-Armenian students attending Armenian schools and those attending non-Armenian schools, found that the latter were more integrated into the larger Lebanese society. This implies that I would have been categorized among the "more assimilated" Armenians in Lebanon.
60. In sampling the community activities, I tried to attend at least one event of each type that is routinely held in any given year, and is open to the public. This bars committee meetings of voluntary associations and private parties. My participation may be somewhat biased because it reflects my own interests. This means I oversampled lectures and concerts and only attended a token number of dinner dances and ladies guild luncheons. Nonetheless, from the list of activities used in this study (see chap. 3), I only missed sports matches.
61. Kendall's Tau c was used to test the strength of association of any two pairs of variables. It ranges in value from - 1.0 to + 1.0 and equals zero if the two variables analyzed are not related. The statistical package used in the analysis (SPSSX) reports the probability of association; thus if a relationship between two variables is significant at the .00001 level, it means that there is one chance in 100,000 that the observed association would have occurred by pure chance. It

should be noted that tau c measures are more conservative than Pearson's R measures of correlation, about two to one. This implies that the results of this study, whenever significant, are far from being fortuitous. An asterisk (*) is used above tau c measures of association to imply the relationship is significant at the .00001 level.

62. This issue is called multiple colinearity. For instance, variables Origin, Generation, Ancestry and Age tend to correlate with each other; thus, the later the generational presence, the higher the probability of respondents to be younger and have mixed ancestry. Similarly, variables Religion and Symparty are used as independent variables throughout the analysis, yet sacred culture and ethnic political culture are also used as assimilation (dependent) variables.
63. Armenian Protestants are estimated to make up 15 percent of the Armenian-American population while the Armenian Catholics 5 percent (see *Zoryan Notes* 3, n. 1, supplement [April 1988]).
64. According to one of the Armenian Catholic clergy I interviewed, their congregation consists of approximately 750 households in the study area. It is estimated that there are some 90,000 Armenian Catholics around the world.
65. It should be noted that the highest percentage of missing answers in the whole survey is in the Income category. This is not unique to Armenians. Income remains one of the most sensitive questions in survey research, even more sensitive than intimate sexual queries!
66. The median income of all white families in the United States for 1980 was $21,904 (Population Reference Bureau 1982, 35).
67. Gender was strongly correlated with Income (.23*) and knowledge of cooking Armenian food (.17*); otherwise there were only four less statistically significant associations in the study. Men were more likely than women never to attend Armenian church services (tau c .12 significant at .005), and more likely to report discrimination. On the other hand, women contacted their siblings more frequently than men (.18 significant at .0003), and more women disagreed that family needs are more important than the individual's (.12 significant at .0001). All the associations except the last one are in the predicted direction, and are corroborated by other studies (Crispino 1980). Faint echoes have started to surface among Armenian feminists questioning the patriarchal attitudes and behavioral forms expressed and sustained by Armenian communal structures (see Avakian 1988). I suspect these results hint at that direction. In any case, more systematic research needs to be done on the role of Armenian women in the maintenance of Armenianness. In a conference entitled: "Mother of God and Daughters of Hayk: Women and Gender in Armenian Culture" sponsored by the Armenian Center, Columbia University on 4 November 1989, I argued that communal forms in the expression of Armenianness lag far behind changes in individual lives; therefore, the question: "To be or not to be an Armenian Woman," is not such a formidable problem at the personal level because identities can be highly flexible and situational. However, at the collective level, Armenian-American women have to live up to idealized role models from the patriarchal past and beyond. Mother of God and Daughters of Hayk are incongruent images that mesh poorly with their daily needs and preoccupations.
68. The business participation rate = (# of self-employed)/(total # of persons in ethnic group) x 1000.
69. It is interesting to note that photography as a profession was not new to

Armenians immigrants. Miller (1981) has shown that photography was pioneered by Armenians in the Near East in the late nineteenth early twentieth century; because of the iconoclastic teachings of the Koran, Muslims were initially reluctant to adopt the use of this new invention.

# 2

# Church and Politics

Two very important institutions Armenian immigrants carried with them to America as part of their cultural baggage were their religious and political institutions; more specifically, the three Armenian churches—Apostolic, Catholic and Protestant—and the three Armenian political parties—Tashnag, Ramgavar, and Hunchag. These historically intertwined institutions have had a significant effect on the lives of the Armenian-American population and subculture.

Communal life in the United States came to be organized around the churches. Immigrants would congregate initially in rented meeting halls or church buildings, but as soon as they had sufficient funds, they would buy or build their own edifices. These houses of worship doubled as locales for social gatherings; almost invariably, they were comprised of a sanctuary and a large hall (and kitchen) that became the hub of a burgeoning collective existence. Where there was a church, there was also politics. Armenian political parties from the start were an integral part of this emergent culture in the New World.

The church and political parties were essential organs for propagating divergent ideologies[1] about Armenians as a people; their ancestral origins, their raison d'être, and their future aspirations. The conflicting worldviews and the vested interests of clergymen, party politicians, and other players culminated in the schism within the Armenian Apostolic church[2] and the community at large. Consequently, internal competition, hostility, and animosity have characterized Armenian life in the diaspora throughout the twentieth century.

As supralocal formal organizations, the religious and political institutions provided links, both metaphorically and pragmatically, between men and women of Armenian descent in the United States and other Armenians around the world, weaving them into the diaspora. As a people, Armenians had traditionally been middlemen minorities (see chap. 1) who espoused a strong ideology of an eventual return to an autonomous homeland. Likewise, the early immigrants who settled in the New World at the turn of the twentieth century thought of themselves as sojourners (Mirak 1983). Though hopes for an immediate return were soon shattered with the Genocide and deportations in Western Armenia and the Sovietization of Eastern Armenia, as a collectivity, Armenian-Americans continued to see themselves as a diaspora, a stateless people scattered around the world.[3] In other words, the churches and the political parties have pushed and pulled the Armenians in diametrically opposite directions. They fostered unity between the diasporan communities, but within each community, they created dissonance and strife.

Armenian-Americans are at a critical juncture in their history. Throughout the twentieth century, while they were undergoing cultural and structural assimilation in their host society, they continued to sustain the ideology of an eventual return to an autonomous homeland. Now, the promise of that "free" Armenia is a definite possibility as a result of recent changes in the Soviet Union and the establishment of the Republic of Armenia. Will Armenian-Americans repatriate? What effect, if any, will the existence of the Republic of Armenia have on Armenian-Americans, individually and collectively? Will it increase or decrease the maintenance of their ethnic identities and subculture? What will future relations between Armenian-Americans and the spiritual homeland be like? Unfortunately, sociologists are not fortune-tellers, if they were, they might have become more popular. I cannot

predict what the future will be like; however, a close examination of the Armenian sacred and political culture in the United States will provide the necessary premise for establishing new courses of action, new policies, and making projections. Here, I question the ideology of an eventual return, the significance of a diaspora, and the role and function of Armenian churches and political parties.

The New York survey confirms that Armenian-Americans are here, in the Unites States, to stay. They are ambivalent about the Armenian Apostolic church. On the one hand, they appreciate its style of worship, rituals, chants, but on the other hand, they find it alienating, unable to fulfill their contemporary needs. Moreover, they do not understand, nor care to know the differences between the various political parties because Armenian politics are irrelevant to their lives. Indeed, the analysis concurs with the critics[4] that both the churches and the political parties are divorced from present-day realities and their ideologies are vacuous.

## Historical Background

In most ancient cultures, the sacred and secular components are often coterminous; for the Armenians this is even more so. The history of the Armenian Apostolic church[5] and that of the Armenian people have been fused together since the fourth century A.D. when the Armenians became the first Christian nation.[6] Moreover, in the fifth century, the Armenian church became autocephalous following a disagreement with its Greek and Roman brethren over the doctrine of the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ.[7] Isolated from other Christian communions, a unique cultural heritage both sacred and secular evolved, and the fate of the Armenian people and that of the Armenian church became inseparable (see Dedeyan 1982; Mirak 1983, 180).

The union between church and state was reinforced after the middle of the fifteenth century, when the Armenian people became subjects of the Ottoman sultans. As a Christian minority in the Ottoman Empire, the Armenians came to be organized into the *Ermeni Millet* (in Turkish meaning "the Armenian race/community"). The *millet* has been defined as "a church organized into a nationality as a nationality organized into a church"[8] (Cahnman 1944, 527). The religious,

political, economic, and social administration of the Armenian people eventuated under the leadership of the Armenian Patriarch in Constantinople. Though the manifest function of the millet was advantageous to the Armenians, granting them a measure of cultural and religious autonomy, its latent function was the creation of political inequality by increasing the social distance between the Armenians and their neighbors, thus encouraging all forms of oppression, institutional discrimination, and prejudice (Atamian 1955, 22 -27; Libaridian 1987).[9] The millet system affected the destiny of the Armenians until the beginning of the twentieth century and culminated in the Genocide (see Sanjian 1965).

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Armenians experienced a literary, artistic, and scientific renaissance. This new awakening did not spare the Armenian church from criticism. Some of the archaic and by then corrupt practices of the church were questioned, and new alternatives were sought. Given the inherent conservatism of the Apostolic church, and the proselytizing prowess of Roman Catholic and New England Protestant missionaries, a small proportion of the Armenian population in Asia Minor left the "mother church" to become Catholics and Protestants. The new converts, nonetheless, remained ethnically Armenian. The Ottoman authorities, recognizing these developments established the Armenian Catholic millet in 1831. This was followed in 1850 by the creation of the Armenian Protestant millet (see Dedeyan 1982; Tootikian 1981).[10] The Armenian Apostolic church retained the majority of its adherents, but the Patriarch was no longer the only spokesman for the Armenian people. For the first time in their history, Armenians came to belong to one of three separate religious denominations: Apostolic, Catholic, Protestant.

Armenians from all three religious persuasions immigrated to the United States, and like all immigrant groups their first effort at preserving their cultural heritage and identity was the transplanting of their churches (see Herberg 1960, 11; Lopata 1964, 210). Worcester, Massachusetts became the cradle of Armenian communal life in the United States. The very first Armenian church (the Armenian Congregational Church of the Martyrs) was founded there in 1881; the first Apostolic church was erected there in 1891; and the first political battles were also witnessed in Worcester (Mirak 1983, 183;

Megerdichian 1983,1).[11] Similarly, Armenian Protestants established their own churches after discovering that they were unwelcome in local Protestant congregations (Mirak 1983, 196; Tootikian 1981, 65-67). In New York City, the first Armenian Protestant church began to meet on a regular basis in 1897, and by 1923 they had their own church building (Mirak 1983,198).[12] Armenian Catholics were organized as a separate community in America relatively late. Small parishes existed for some time in Detroit, Pennsylvania, and Paterson (NJ). The Armenian Catholic Exarchate was established in New York City, as recently as 1983.

At the present time, there are a total of 115 Armenian churches in the United States (see table 1.1 in chap. 1). Of these, 53 are affiliated with the Eastern and Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America, that is, they are under the jurisdiction of the Holy See of Echmiadzin (in the Republic of Armenia). Another 28 are affiliated with the Eastern and Western Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, that is, they follow the Holy See of Cilicia (in Antelias, Lebanon). There are a total of 28 Armenian Protestant churches, the majority (10) of these being in Los Angeles.[13] These Protestant churches comprise a number of denominations; many are Congregational, others are Presbyterian, Pentecostal, Church of the Nazarene; still others call themselves Evangelicals or Brethrens. They also vary in their emphasis on proselytism or evangelistic fervor, some come close to resembling the southern right-wing Fundamentalists. The Armenian Catholic (Eastern Rite) church is the smallest; it has only six parishes (see *Armenian American Almanac* 1990).[14]

There has been a boom in church construction in the last few decades reflecting the demand created by the influx of new immigrants, the rising affluence of the parishioners, and their move to suburbia. Constructing church edifices has been easier than preparing officials to serve in them. A vast majority of the clergymen are foreign-born and most have received their training in seminaries overseas. Undoubtedly, this mirrors their worldviews and their approach to their ministry; of course, there are some who have been more responsive to American circumstances than others. Furthermore, the congregations they serve increasingly consist of college-educated men and women who demand sophisticated sermons and theological arguments from their clergymen. There is only one Apostolic

seminary in the New World, Saint Nerses Armenian Seminary, in New Rochelle, on the outskirts of New York City.[15] On the other hand, according to the *Armenian American Almanac* (1990), there are two Protestant seminaries; Fuller Theological Seminary and Armenian Bible College, both in Pasadena (CA). Indeed, it seems appropriate to call the shortage of highly educated, well-trained clergymen in the Armenian church a serious crisis.

Modern Armenian political consciousness and political parties trace their origins to the late nineteenth century. During the final years of the Ottoman Empire, social, political and economic conditions in Anatolia had seriously deteriorated. Armenians, especially the peasantry, suffered from widespread corruption and oppression. Revolutionary political parties emerged when the reforms advocated by the traditional Armenian bourgeoisie and the Armenian Apostolic church proved to be ineffective. The most important party was the Tashnagtsutiun (Armenian Revolutionary Federation—ARF)[16] founded in 1890, whose goals were political emancipation and administrative autonomy for the Armenian people, as well as social-structural and economic reforms. The Tashnag party's agenda advocated the use of violence, and supplied *fedayees* [17] or freedom fighters to help Armenian peasantry defend themselves in Turkey at the turn of the century.

The nationalistic, socialistic platform of the Tashnag party appealed to the peasants, artisans, and the radicalized elements of the intelligentsia. In contrast, the commercial and industrial bourgeois classes were hostile to revolutionary movements. They did not want to antagonize government authorities and jeopardize their relatively advantaged position. They found expression to their interests in the Armenian Democratic Liberal party (ADL) commonly known as the Ramgavar party, established in 1921.[18] A third party, the Social Democratic Hunchagian party was established slightly earlier[19] than the Tashnag party. It advocated a more orthodox Marxist ideology, and was never able to attract a large following (Atamian 1955; Dedeyan 1982; Libaridian 1979; Ter Minassian 1984; Walker 1980).

Over the years, the political and ideological arena of the Armenian people has crystallized into two factions; the Tashnag and anti-Tashnag. As a political party, the Tashnagtsutiun commands the largest number of official members and can mobilize a wider

following due to its revolutionary ideology, modes of recruitment, and operational tactics. The anti-Tashnag "side" consists of members and sympathizers of the Ramgavar and Hunchagian parties and a silent majority that call themselves *chezok* (literally "neutral," nonpartisan). The *chezok* do not necessarily endorse the Ramgavar or Hunchagian parties' platforms and agenda or identify with them, but are opposed to the militant ideology of the Tashnags (see Phillips 1978; O'Grady 1979).[20]

The main difference between the Armenian political parties at the time of their creation was the varying class interests each served. This is no longer the case for contemporary Armenian-Americans as the survey will indicate, though more economically and politically disadvantaged Armenians in the Middle East have found expression of their needs in the Armenian Revolutionary Federation. The short-lived Republic of Armenia (1918-1920) and the consequent Sovietization of the land is one of the major issues of conflict between the two factions (see Hovannisian 1971, 1982). The Tashnags made up the majority of the governing body of the independent republic. At its inception, the republic faced insurmountable problems. Besides the logistics of establishing a new state, the population, much of it refugees from the western provinces, was plagued by the ravages of war, famine, and disease. Moreover, the fledgling republic's powerful neighbors had a different agenda for its future. Besides, Western economic and military aid, which had been promised, failed to materialize. In 1922, Eastern Armenia formally became part of the Soviet Union.

Feelings of rejection and betrayal by fellow Christian nations in Europe, self-resentment on having relied on the West, disappointment at having lost an independent homeland, and frustration over their inability to change the situation, according to Atamian,[21] have resulted in the present Armenian worldview. "It is that *weltanschauung* which explains the non-rationality of the contemporary Armenian ideological conflict and the bitter, internalized self-aggression and self-hatred of the Armenian groups" (Atamian 1955, 251).

The Tashnags see themselves as the defenders of Armenian nationalism and identity, having fought against the Turkish tyrants and sacrificed many patriots to martyrdom. This gives them the vicarious sense of moral victory and courage that prevents them from feelings of inferiority and helplessness. A free, independent Armenia remains

their political goal and raison d'être. It justifies the revolutionary doctrines, the strong esprit de corps among the rank and file, and aggressive relations with other Armenian groups. They perceive the "others" as cowards who did not fight the Turks. The emphasis is on values of self-respect, pride, patriotism, virility: all of them reminiscent of the nineteenth-century Armenian intellectual renaissance. Association with the Tashnagtsutiun is supposed to be more than a political party affiliation. It is identifying with the consciousness of a people, a people with a separate history, culture, and language (Atamian 1955). The Armenians who do not endorse the revolutionary values, militant tactics, and "terrorism" have come to form a collective ideology in opposition to the Tashnag party line. The adversary elements have been polarized in an anti-Tashnag stance, though they remain far from being an organized group or having a coherent political platform.

Having lost their independence and power base in an independent Armenia, the Tashnags were opposed to the Sovietization of their homeland. The weaker position of the Ramgavars led them to interpret the Soviet takeover more positively as the lesser of two evils. The Ramgavars rationalized that, as a small nation surrounded by powerful neighbors, Armenia was vulnerable. Thus, Soviet Russia was perceived as a protector of the Armenian people, their culture, language, and land, as well as a potential ally capable of punishing Turkey and taking revenge. The pro-Soviet policy of the Ramgavar party and the anti-Soviet policy of the Tashnag party is somewhat of a paradox. While a conservative, antirevolutionary organization (i.e., Ramgavars) with bourgeois interests supported the Soviet regime in Armenia, the socialistic, revolutionary Tashnags condemned it on the issue of nationalism. The two sides with their opposing political orientations and ideologies are split on the issue of Armenian national interests, each vying for the leadership of the Armenian people and claiming to speak for it. They have come through the years to dissipate their frustrations and hostilities at each other rather than at a remote, less accessible enemy.

After the Genocide, the dispersed Armenian refugees and immigrants abandoned hope of an immediate return to their homes and lands. The two political and ideological factions had to develop auxiliary organizations to fulfill the various functions required in a

refugee/immigrant community. Besides the physical survival of the "starving Armenians"[22] the second most pressing task for the leadership became the maintenance of Armenian language and culture in host societies. Given the antagonistic orientations to Armenian national interests, the two factions duplicated their supporting organizations, a wasteful procedure considering the limited human and material resources. As a result, there are two churches, two women's auxiliaries, two youth/sports organizations, two charitable associations,[23] and so on, each affiliated with a political faction in nearly every Armenian-American and diasporan community. The adherents of each philosophy support their own activities and programs, almost totally avoiding the other "side." [24]

In the United States, the official schism of the Armenian community took place with the murder of Archbishop Tourian by Tashnag party members in New York City while he was celebrating Divine Liturgy on December 24, 1933. The archbishop was designated by the See of Echmiadzin (in Soviet Armenia) to assume the spiritual leadership of all the Armenians in America. The Catholicos, ecclesiastical head of the Armenian Apostolic church, was perceived by the Tashnag party to be under the control of the Soviets, therefore unable to assume the spiritual leadership of all the Armenian people.

The Armenian Apostolic church became the arena for the expression of conflict at the local level in various diasporan communities.[25] The church was said to be an instrument in the hands of Soviet authorities, dictating their political aims.[26] This incident split the Armenian-American community into two hostile warring factions. Members of the Tashnag party were expelled from the existing Armenian churches, forcing them to eventually build their own churches. The Tashnag congregation remained ecclesiastically independent until 1957 when it came under the jurisdiction of the See of Cilicia. Thus, the Armenian Apostolic church is united on religious doctrine, but it is administered by two separate bodies.[27] The murder of the archbishop is often given as a reason to justify the schism, but in fact it was the effect of a complex situation in which political, ideological, and social psychological elements were involved.

In 1956, there was further dissension in the Armenian diaspora. The newly elected Catholicos to the See of Echmiadzin came into conflict with the See of Cilicia as the two centers tried to increase their

jurisdiction over the Armenian communities in the diaspora. The Cilician See came to be dominated by the Tashnag party while the opposing parties took up the defense of the See of Echmiadzin. Cold War politics were influential in the events; there were even allegations of CIA involvement which the Tashnag party has denied (see Phillips 1978, 142-55). An impassioned strife culminated in bloody battles between the two factions during the Lebanese civil strife in 1958.

With the end of the Cold War and other changes in the political climate between East and West, the political and ideological distinctions within the Armenian diaspora became blurred, and the rhetoric of strife and hostility mellowed. The Tashnag party came to accept Soviet Armenia as a homeland in the absence of the possibility of retribution for Armenian lands by the Turkish government in the foreseeable future and the ever-increasing threat of assimilation in the diasporan communities. The Soviet Armenian Republic, though not an ideal arrangement for the Armenian people, was perceived to be be an adequate solution, for the short term. There existed the possibility of salvaging the threatened Armenian language and culture and possibly of becoming a territorial base for an independent Armenia in the future. The Ramgavar and Hunchagian parties, on the other hand, recognized that Soviet Armenia was incapable of assuming the political and territorial aspirations of the Armenian people. Meanwhile, in the interest of better relations with the diaspora communities, the Soviet authorities made a number of compromises to Armenian cultural nationalism (Mouradian 1990; Libaridian 1979).[28]

The situation also changed in Lebanon, one of the bastions of Armenian political life in the diaspora (see Adalian 1989, 105). With the beginning of the Civil War in 1975, the three political parties, the Tashnags, Hunchags, and Ramgavars, were formally united and agreed on a policy of "positive neutrality" regarding the Lebanese crisis. This helped minimize the unavoidable loss of human lives and Armenian property, both private and public (see Libaridian 1979, 50). The resolution of the conflict within the Armenian-American community was not as successful. In the absence of any urgent reason to join forces, attempts at unity were plagued by lack of trust and the resurgence of old issues.[29] The reason behind the successful rapprochement of the Armenian political parties in Lebanon and the failed attempts in the United States can be understood by Georg

Simmel's proposition that conflict with an outside enemy increases cohesion within the group by providing a stimulus for change. I will elaborate on this point later in this chapter (Simmel 1955, 87-93; Coser 1956, 87-95).

The role of Armenian "terrorist" movements in the late 1970s and early 1980s,[30] in particular the ARA (Armenian Revolutionary Army, formerly Justice Commandos of the Armenian Genocide) and ASALA (Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia),[31] have been analyzed as contenders for the political leadership of the Armenian diaspora. According to Tölölyan,[32] their attacks on Turkish targets were more a means for legitimating themselves in the eyes of the Armenian people than taking on their prospective, but as yet remote, enemy. The question is: Have these organizations been successful in awakening bourgeois Armenians of the diaspora to the plight of their less advantaged compatriots? Some analysts suggest so. Kurz and Merari (1985, 70) write: "The emergence of ASALA caused an urgent need for the more conservative streams in the diaspora to fight for recognition in world opinion" (see also Gunter 1986). What about the elusive Armenian Question: were the aims of the "terrorist" movements achieved? The answer is no. The government of Turkey has not as yet recognized the Armenian Genocide, nor, of course, moved toward retribution of land or property owned by Armenians.

In a content analysis of the evening news on American Network television, (ABC, CBS, and NBC) between 1968 and 1983, Ayanian and Ayanian (1987) counted forty-four stories mentioning Armenians or Armenia. They found that "if not for political violence, Armenians would have received essentially no coverage on the evening news during this period" (Ayanian and Ayanian 1987, 17). Coverage of the "terrorist" acts was able to increase "name-recognition," yet "the networks tended to reduce Armenians to terrorists (not freedom fighters).... [They] evaded the burden of investigation and education" (Ayanian and Ayanian 1987, 29). The question as to why these acts of violence were instigated was rarely asked, nor was there much discussion of the historical context (see also Saba 1989).

As a result of Mikhail Gorbachev's reform policies of glasnost and perestroika, the stage for the Armenian political theater has shifted to Soviet Armenia and the USSR since February 1988, where the scenes have been changing with dramatic speed. Soviet Armenians were the

first to test the limits of Gorbachev's reforms. The rallies that started in the fall of 1987 over environmental issues eventually gathered momentum. Crowds of over one hundred thousand people—at their highest point even a million—were protesting daily in the streets of Yerevan. The rallies and strikes gave birth to the Karabagh movement and in February 1988 a group of intellectual activists formed the Karabagh Committee. It was also in the same month that the Sumgait pogroms in Azerbaijan took place, adding fuel to already raging fires.

The Karabagh movement was a struggle to reattach to Soviet Armenia a small (4,500 sq. km), mountainous piece of land, populated mostly by Armenians, and historically belonging to the Armenians until it was annexed to the Republic of Azerbaijan in 1923 by Soviet authorities (see Libaridian 1988; Mouradian 1990). However, the Karabagh movement became much more than that. It was a grass roots movement for radical change in Soviet Armenia. It was a protest against the inherent bribery and widespread corruption of the system and the local elites supporting the status quo. It rejuvenated nationalistic feelings, sparked interest in Armenian culture and history, and mobilized a whole nation, as well as other Armenians within the Soviet Union, to stand up for their rights as a people and as a nation (see Hovannisian 1988; *Armenian Reporter*, 23 February 1989, p. 18; Libaridian 1991).

In the midst of this social and political turmoil, an earthquake struck Soviet Armenia on December 7, 1988, adding tremendous physical damage. The earthquake focused world attention on Soviet Armenians as aid and money for reconstruction projects poured in. The political and socioeconomic demands of the people had to take a backseat, but only for a short while. In the meanwhile border clashes did not stop,[33] and in January 1990 Armenians were massacred again, this time in Baku. Finally, the people of Armenia triumphed when on May 20, 1990 they held their first free elections in seventy years, throwing the Communists out of power.

On August 4, 1990, the new government elected Levon Ter-Petrosyan president. And on August 23, 1990, the parliament declared its intention to secede from the Soviet Union. Landlocked, surrounded by unfriendly neighbors, and threatened by the military might of the Soviet Union, a formidable task faces the new leadership.[34] The stated goal of the Republic of Armenia is the well-being and survival

of its people, something that it is believed can be attained through democracy and independence.[35]

It is too early to tell what the future holds for the Republic of Armenia. As the Soviet Union crumbles with bewildering speed, new opportunities, and of course pitfalls, open up for the Armenians. For the first time in almost a century, there is heightened optimism, hope that the dream of an autonomous homeland may be achieved soon. The Armenian people have turned a new page in their history. The Republic of Armenia is emerging as the legitimate "center" of Armenian life and culture. These changes have shaken the very foundations of collective structures and institutions in the diaspora. They question the sojourner's ideology of an eventual return; the rationale for Armenian political parties; and the role of the Apostolic church as the defender of the faithful. More specifically, they call for the reevaluation of the Armenian-American community's linkages with the new republic, and the schism within its midst.

## Armenian Sacred Culture in the United States

It is the thesis of this book that assimilation and identity in the United States go hand in hand. Later-generation Armenian-Americans are less and less likely to know and practice the subculture of their immigrant parents and grandparents. Yet they continue to feel very strongly about their Armenian roots. Their expression of Armenianness is tailor-made to suit their individual personalities, their life-styles and the urban, postindustrial society they live in. I have also shown in the previous chapter that the historical conditions and ideological foundations of the United States made socioreligious subcommunities more likely to survive than purely ethnic communities. Therefore, it is hypothesized that the sacred culture is somewhat more resistant to forces of assimilation. Here, I measure the sacred culture with respondent's religious affiliation, frequency of participation in Armenian and non-Armenian worship services, attitudes toward the Armenian church, and maintenance of sacred traditions.

Sociologists postulate that in premodern societies, sacred beliefs and practices pervaded almost all aspects of one's daily life. I have shown that historically, being an Armenian meant membership in an

Armenian church: Apostolic, Protestant, Catholic.[36] An Armenian could not be a Jew[37] or a Muslim (Phillips 1978, 102). In the New York study, 64 percent of respondents were affiliated with the Armenian Apostolic Church, 9.7 percent with the Armenian Protestant church and 3.8 percent with the Armenian Catholic church. These figures are believed to be representative of Armenian-Americans in general. In spite of their continued identifications with Armenianness, the remaining 22.3 percent of respondents in the sample, who did not belong to any Armenian church, have gone a step further from historical tradition by separating their ethnic identity from their religious affiliation. Of these, 6.3 percent declared "no religion" and the rest were members of mainstream Protestant denominations (almost 11 percent) or the Roman Catholic church (3 percent).

In order to understand these changes in the sacred culture of Armenian Apostolics, I refer to Susan Pattie's distinction between religion and church. She defines religion as belief systems in spiritual life and the nature of ties between human beings and God or the supernatural; while church is the institution mediating and facilitating religion; it "includes the physical building, ecclesiastical hierarchy, doctrine, and services" (1990, 293). With increasing modernization, the yearly cycle of church traditions and celebrations take less and less time and are less likely to invade one's daily existence. Religious activities and the use of religious vocabulary become more and more specialized, distinct, "isolated and definable as a category of experience" (p. 294). Indeed, later in this chapter, I will show that two of the sacred traditions of the Armenian people are being forgotten. However, the church as an institution has remained durable. As mentioned already, it embodies both sacred and secular ideologies of the Armenian people. The lines between church and peoplehood/nationalism are blurred. This explains why "atheists, agnostics, and anti-clericals" attend Divine Liturgy, often several times a year; not only for weddings, baptisms, funerals, requiems *(hokehankist)*, but also for April 24, and possibly *Vartanantz*.

I find Pattie's concepts most applicable to the immigrant generation, because for them their institutional affiliation is taken for granted. But they are less applicable for American-born generations, in whom religion, like ethnic identity, becomes voluntary, a choice individuals consciously make. In later generations, men and women of

Armenian descent are more likely to "shop around" for a congregation that will fulfill their needs in terms of style of worship, demographic composition of congregation, spiritual dogma, and so on. Therefore, as I will show, the Armenian churches, especially the Apostolics, need to become "competitive" in order to attract and retain adherents. From immigrant churches they need to adapt and become Americanized churches. The number of respondents who declared "no religion" or those who were affiliated with non-Armenian denominations provide evidence to the claim that Armenianness in America is becoming more and more individualized. People of Armenian origin want to choose their preferred mode of identity and their own particular way of expressing it. For some, religion may not even be a consideration; such is the case of a young professional whose Armenian paternal grandfather immigrated from Turkey. He would like to be ethnically connected to the Armenian secular community, but not to the church. Here are his comments:

> I would like to rediscover my Armenian heritage. As an Agnostic, joining a church is out, though I wouldn't mind attending functions at a church.

Pattie's London Armenian informants, predominantly from the immigrant generation, expressed the opposite of these sentiments. I quote from her work:

> We accept our church as it is. We don't go around shopping for the best church in the neighborhood, the one with the priest who gives the best sermon or whatever. Because it's not the particular priest who is important, it's the church and we have to support it no matter what the priest does or doesn't do. (Pattie 1990, 309)

Still, Pattie concedes that the future portends individualistic forms of religious affiliation and practice. Therefore, the Apostolic church in the Western diaspora, be it in England or the United States, is likely to receive increasing criticism from its members. She writes:

> Whereas some are satisfied and inspired by a church of atmosphere and ritual, others ask why they are not provided with intellectual food as well. The emphasis of some priests on nationalism (sermons on historical heroes, exhortations to be [metaphorically] soldiers for the Armenian nation) is welcomed by many while a vocal minority prefer more of Christian doctrine and spirituality. (Pattie 1990, 320)

I suggest that Gerhart Lenski's (1963, 23) distinction between *associational* and *communal* involvement is more useful in

understanding the religious behavior of later-generation Armenian-Americans. The associational form of religious life denotes frequency of church attendance, while the communal form implies the confinement of one's primary group ties to one's socioreligious group.[38] Lenski has argued that with increasing Americanization of the immigrant communities (also increasing urbanization of the population, rising educational levels, and the spread of middle-class values), the associational aspect of religion increases. People in the third generation are more likely to attend church regularly than those in the first and second generation, even when class is held constant (Lenski 1963, 47, 55). At the same time, with increasing Americanization, the probability of friendships and marriage outside one's socioreligious subcommunity increases, therefore decreasing the communal influence. In other words, as the New York data demonstrates, the involvement of first- and second-generation Armenian-Americans can be characterized as communal; while in later generations, for those who consciously choose to invest their time and energy in what Pattie calls "religion," their involvement is more likely to be associational. That is, they are more likely to attend worship services regularly and to take that participation seriously.

### *Armenian Church Attendance*

How often do Armenian-Americans attend an Armenian church? Simply put, not very often. There is almost a ninefold increase between the foreign-born generation (6.5 percent) and the fourth generation (56 percent) in the proportion of respondents who never attended an Armenian church during the year prior to the study (table 2.1). The increase in those who do not attend an Armenian church is steady and significant with each passing generation in America. It should be noted that foreign-born respondents are not frequent attenders either; most (40 percent) attend only "several times a year." Nonetheless, 33 percent of the first generation attend an ethnic church at least once a month compared to 23 percent of the second generation, 25 percent of respondents with one parent who is U.S.-born, 12 percent of respondents with two parents who are U.S.-born and 6.3 percent of respondents with two parents and at least one grandparent who are U.S.-born.

It is interesting to note that there are differences within the three Armenian denominations in mean frequencies of attendance. Apostolics are not frequent attenders. Any casual visitor to an Armenian Apostolic church would readily observe that it is rarely full on an ordinary Sunday, unless a requiem service *(hokehankist)*[39] is

**TABLE 2.1**
**Frequency Distribution of Armenian Church Attendance by Generation**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 580 | (216) | (271) | (36) | (41) | (16) |
| Never | 6.5 | 24.7 | 33.3 | 36.6 | 56.3 |
| Once or twice a year | 21.3 | 22.1 | 25.0 | 34.1 | 25.0 |
| Several times a year | 39.4 | 30.3 | 16.7 | 17.1 | 12.5 |
| Once a month | 13.9 | 12.5 | 11.1 | 2.4 | 6.3 |
| Once a week | 19.0 | 10.3 | 13.9 | 9.8 | 0.0 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

**TABLE 2.2**
**Frequency Distribution of Armenian Church Attendance by Respondents' Religious Affiliation**

| | Apostolic Armenian | Protestant Armenian | Catholic Armenian | Other (Non-Arm.) | Non Religion |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 572 | (366) | (56) | (22) | (92) | (36) |
| Never | 7.4 | 12.5 | 22.7 | 57.6 | 58.3 |
| Once or twice a year | 21.0 | 21.4 | 22.7 | 28.3 | 30.6 |
| Several times a year | 41.3 | 16.1 | 27.3 | 12.0 | 11.1 |
| Once a month | 16.1 | 12.5 | 4.5 | 2.2 | 0.0 |
| Once a week | 14.2 | 37.5 | 22.7 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

scheduled after the Divine Liturgy. Christmas and Easter are a different matter. Armenians may drive sometimes for an hour or two to partake in the ceremonial ritual, but also to see and to be seen. Only 14 percent of Apostolics attend about once a week compared to 38 percent of the Armenian Protestants (table 2.2). The Armenian Catholics are somewhere in between. A nonrandom survey conducted in metropolitan New York and New Jersey among Armenian Apostolics found similar frequencies of attendance. Of the 486 households that responded to that study, 22 percent said they attend "regularly," 13 percent once a month, 19 percent on religious holidays, and 20 percent for weddings and funerals *(Armenian Reporter*, 16 and 23 April 1987).

Respondents affiliated with other churches and those with no religion were more likely to attend an Armenian church because they were pressured by their families. It appears that they comply most often during high holidays and, of course, when there is a wedding or a funeral (see table 2.3). Even though third-generation Armenian-Americans may identify with their roots, they are reluctant to participate as often as their parents' generation in the Armenian world, sacred or secular. This is the case of a middle-aged second-generation mother who believes that her "[two] grown daughters are quite ambivalent regarding church attendance, but they love the Armenian Church and their Armenian heritage."

I attribute the differences in frequencies of attendance in the three Armenian denominations to varying church traditions. A favorite excuse among the Apostolic congregation for not attending Divine Liturgy is the length of the service. On a regular Sunday, Divine Liturgy is about two hours long, longer (three hours) on major holidays. Several respondents commented on the length of the services. For example, a fifty-year-old second-generation woman said: "Service should be shorter length of time!" Another reason for lack of frequent attendance in the Armenian Apostolic church is said to be the liberal attitude of the church in dogma and enforcement of strict observance rules. For example, one often finds a crowd of young men standing and chatting outside the church while the service is in progress inside. Others may go into the church, stay for half an hour or so, then leave. It has been suggested that this liberal attitude stems from the structure and organization of the Apostolic church. The

extensive involvement of the laity in church administration, even to the election of the Catholicos, the head of the church, has decreased the social distance between the clergy and the faithful (see O'Grady 1979, 67-73).

The Armenian Apostolic church has been described as tolerant (Ormanian 1955, 100). In a study of the Armenian community in

TABLE 2.3
**Frequency Distribution of Reasons for Attending Armenian Church by Religious Affiliation**
**(multiple response)**

| | Apostolic Armenian | Protestant Armenian | Catholic Armenian | Other (Non-Arm.) | No Religion | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 473 (cases) | (344) | (48) | (19) | (43) | (19) | |
| Have always gone (190 responses) | 85.3 | 10.5 | 1.1 | 1.1 | 2.1 | 100.0 |
| Meet friends (81 responses) | 76.5 | 14.8 | 1.2 | 6.2 | 1.2 | 100.0 |
| Family expects it (36 responses) | 63.7 | 8.3 | 5.6 | 8.3 | 13.9 | 100.0 |
| Worship and pray (249 responses) | 77.1 | 10.8 | 5.2 | 6.8 | 0.0 | 100.0 |
| Enjoy singing (137 responses) | 86.1 | 8.0 | 0.0 | 4.4 | 1.5 | 100.0 |
| Make me feel better (137 responses) | 87.6 | 5.8 | 2.2 | 2.2 | 2.2 | 100.0 |
| Keep in touch with Armenians (261 responses) | 77.0 | 11.1 | 3.4 | 6.9 | 1.5 | 100.0 |
| Teach my children about Armenians (145 responses) | 85.5 | 10.3 | 0.0 | 3.4 | 0.7 | 100.0 |
| Attended wedding or funeral (34 responses) | 26.5 | 5.9 | 5.9 | 38.2 | 23.5 | 100.0 |
| Gone for holidays (14 responses) | 42.9 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 35.7 | 21.4 | 100.0 |

Washington, DC, O'Grady found that the members of the Apostolic church held a wide range of beliefs and opinions on church doctrine and Christianity. As one of her informants told her, the Apostolics do not try to "intellectualize religion as the Protestant churches do. They emotionalize it" (1979, 60).[40] Likewise, one of Susan Pattie's informants in London, a woman in her early forties, an artist, made similar remarks:

> You see, I like the ritual. I don't want everything spelled out. I can't bear it.... I think it is the atmosphere which is created by [the *sharagans* (hymns)] ... the music, the liturgy is very beautiful and I like that—the fact that it leaves you free to think of yourself and just meditate, float about in your own mind. (Pattie 1990, 306-7)

Pattie explicitly specifies that Armenians are "born into" the Apostolic church; they "absorb" its tenets and doctrine, they do not "learn" them. With increasing intermarriage and assimilation, the church can no longer afford to be "absorbed" by osmosis. Presently, the Armenian Apostolic church is trying to institutionalize formal religious education for the youth; however, in the past many Armenians received their religious training in Protestant and Catholic Sunday schools (see O'Grady 1979, 60), remaining ignorant of the teachings of the Apostolic church, a fact supported in this survey. Typically, a middle-aged immigrant from the Middle East commented: "I don't understand *Badarak* [Divine Liturgy]." This respondent now attends a Seventh Day Adventist church in her local community. Though doctrinal beliefs in the Apostolic church are flexible, O'Grady found that by contrast, "beliefs in moral values are more conservative and well-defined, since moral values are taught not only by the church but also within the family" (1979, 62). This combination of factors produces an associationally liberal/tolerant but communally conservative mixture of religious influence for Armenian Apostolics.

It might not be far from reality to suggest that more people come to Armenian churches to attend secular activities than they do to worship and pray. A large proportion of Armenian-American collective events are held in the church compound (see O'Grady 1979, 34). The church actively encourages the development of "communal" ties among its members by scheduling a social hour or luncheon following Divine Liturgy. These face-to-face relationships and companionship fulfill significant functions for the immigrant and second generations.

Respondents' comments reveal the importance of this communal aspect of religion. For example, a fifty-eight-year-old, second-generation man points out:

> I grew up in the outskirts of Brooklyn where there was no Armenian church and very few Armenian families so I was raised with little outside influence. My wife on the other hand was raised in Washington Heights[41] where there was a very strong Armenian influence. Her friends were much more Armenian than mine. Because of this I feel the church was and is the only thing that can really bind and keep the Armenian community together.

Thus, if the manifest function of church attendance is to worship and pray, then its latent function is to create a sense of community, enhancing feelings of belonging and cohesion. This latter function seems to take precedence in the immigrant church. Not surprisingly, keeping in touch with the Armenian community received the highest number of responses (55 percent of cases, see table 2.3).[42] One can worship and pray in any nearby church, but Armenian immigrants and their children sometimes travel long distances to share the communal experience of an Armenian church. Outside the family, the Armenian church remains the repository of ethnic identity, affiliation, and the hub of social life (see Warner and Srole 1945, 218).

The findings of this study are corroborated by a survey conducted by AREC—Armenian Religious Educational Council of the Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America—in 1985. In spite of the methodological limitations of the AREC study, it is useful to compare some of its results with mine.[43] A total of 344 questionnaires were answered by seventeen parishes belonging to the Prelacy. Because over half of the respondents were over fifty years of age,[44] additional questionnaires were completed by forty-eight young people under age thirty. Forty percent of the general sample attended Armenian church regularly, compared to 29 percent of the under-thirty sample. These percentages are much higher than those reported in this sample but can be attributed to the sampling bias.

Similar to my findings, the AREC study revealed that the Armenian church stands for more than just a place of worship. About one-fourth to one-third of the sample attended the Armenian church to socialize with other Armenians and perpetuate the Armenian culture and heritage. The report concludes: "This would seem to indicate that our churches fulfill a broad spectrum of needs other than religious." The

AREC survey further revealed the ignorance and confusion of the respondents about church beliefs such as life after death, the Nicene Creed, and the Holy Trinity. Nearly 50 percent did not know that the Armenian Apostolic church considers Jesus Christ to be truly God and truly Man. Though some of AREC's respondents were satisfied with church traditions, saying: "I'm devoted 100 percent to my church and fully *appreciate* it's lack of dogma," younger cohorts tended to be more frequently dissatisfied (italics in original). Forty-eight percent of the youth sample did not understand the *Badarak* [Divine Liturgy], the overwhelming majority (92 percent) of young people (i.e., the more Americanized) were more interested in religion per se and wanted to learn more about the Armenian liturgy. Considering the self-selection of these respondents into the AREC survey, these facts reveal only the tip of the iceberg.

With increasing Americanization, people are more likely to demand a basic understanding of the church liturgy, rituals, and doctrines, in contrast to the immigrant generation whose devotion to the Armenian church is taken for granted, as long as it serves its communal functions. A thirty-year-old woman, whose father is U.S.-born and whose mother immigrated from Syria, parted ways with the Apostolic church after a disagreement concerning her wedding ceremony. Her husband, being a non-Armenian and a nonbeliever in any organized religion, must have objected to some of the demands of the church.[45] Here are her comments, which illustrate the issues inherent in Armenian church affiliation that American-born Armenians face:

> We were not allowed to marry in my "supposed" church, unless he and his brother (best man) took communion, were baptized, and my husband promised to be a parishioner. We had numerous "talks" with my priest. It was hypocritical for us to marry there because it held no meaning to us. All the Armenian church cares about is procreating other "people" into their church, their way.

> I never cared about our church services growing up, I only went through the motions.... In College I attended services—basically Catholic geared—and I never enjoyed anything so much. There was real communication, discussion, and singing. All in understandable English, needless to say.

> I am so turned off by the Armenian church, as are a lot of people my age. Perhaps if I'd married an Armenian, we would be into the "church thing" now.

There is mounting evidence that the Armenian church needs to accommodate the growing numbers of Armenian-Americans who may continue to enjoy the communal involvement, like their parents, but over and above that, want to emphasize the devotional/associational component of the church.

Style of worship depends on individual needs and preferences. Generally, people of Armenian descent dissatisfied with the Armenian Apostolic church have searched elsewhere for their spiritual needs. A forty-year-old second-generation man wrote, "I attend non-Armenian church regularly. I go to Armenian church only on special occasions for family sake. I attend Baptist church. It is a Bible-preaching church. Armenian [Apostolic] churches are too liberal."

Several respondents deplored the lack of evangelistic fervor in the Armenian Apostolic church. Many of those were born-again Christians, but not exclusively so. A fifty-five-year-old third-generation woman wrote that her family supported the Armenian National church for thirty-two years but has decided to join the Reformed Church of America because "the people are sincere, not status conscious and love each other. The minister is truly a 'ministering minister.'" Another woman, thirty-nine years of age, who like her mother is U.S.-born attends an Episcopal church, replied, "Initially, because my husband is of the Episcopal faith. Now, because I find the sermons more relevant to my needs than the sermons in the Armenian church." Indeed, one should ask, where are the Bible study sessions, the explanations of the liturgy, the history of the Armenian church, discussions on the essence of Christianity? These events are so rare in the Apostolic church that they often go unnoticed and unattended.

The Armenian intelligentsia too has been increasingly critical of the Apostolic church. For example, Anahid Ter Minassian has observed that the Armenian church is facing a severe crisis in authority, vocation, discipline, and intellectual arena.[46] Similarly, Khachig Tölölyan (1988) has argued that the Armenian Apostolic church has neglected a metaphysical dialogue with its sacred traditions.[47] It has failed to produce a theology of exile, to reinterpret dogma. Islam has been the "other" of Armenian Christianity since the fourteenth century, a kind of a buffer state that has sheltered the Armenian church

from outside influences, including positive ones. The fusion between church and state, indistinguishable for Ottoman and later Middle Eastern Armenians, has produced a politicized identity that is alien to symbolic Armenian-Americans. Furthermore, the Armenian church has not taken a position vis-à-vis divorce, homosexuality, gambling, abortion, nuclear war, or any of the contemporary issues that puzzle and concern modern men and women.[48] There is a growing concern among American-born Armenians that the Apostolic church needs to become more relevant to individuals living in postindustrial societies. It needs to update its sacred traditions and reinterpret them instead of being a blind conformist to tradition.

The most comprehensive critique comes from theologian Vigen Guroian, a third-generation Armenian-American. Guroian argues that the Armenian Christian world died in 1915 along with 1.5 million Armenians and the millet system. Yet, the Apostolic church claims it is the "soul of the nation" and projects the illusion that church and nation still function in unison.[49] It has become an instrument for national aspirations. In other words, in preserving Armenianness, the church is converted to a custodian for folk dance, food, artifacts, rituals, etc. Guroian characterizes the present status of the church as "secular religion of ethnicity." Then he asks: how does such a church "differ from the Girl Scouts, the local garden club, Republican club, or health spa?" His answer is that the church must be something more, something greater than just a vehicle for perpetuating Armenianness. It must have a biblical mission, a spiritual essence. Guroian[50] (1990, 26) advocates a diaspora theology that would acknowledge, on the one hand, that it is permanent because most Armenian-Americans will never return to a homeland, and on the other hand, that the diaspora is transitional because it is a phase in the process of acculturation into American life.

I find Guroian's observations on "unity" within the Apostolic church highly pertinent to my thesis (see discussion below and table 2.10). His reflections were spurred by a debate he witnessed at a national meeting of parish representatives. I quote, in full, a passage from his book, *Incarnate Love:*

> The Armenian Church's reason for being has been misunderstood by its own people. Never once in all the debate was it argued: "Unity must be achieved because the people of God, who are called to holiness, must never do such violence

> to the body of their Lord." Nor did even one member say in so many words: "We cannot go on dividing our Lord's garments and crucifying him on a cross of ungodly political controversies." Instead, one heard: "We must have unity in order to save ourselves." By this was meant "save our ethnic identity." The Church, however, does not exist in order to save anyone's ethnicity. If Armenians continue to view their church as the means to such an end, they will not only fail to achieve unity in America; they also will fail to retain the great numbers of American-born Armenians now and in the future. (Guroian 1987, 170)

Indeed, the statistical evidence provided by the New York survey confirms Guroian's predictions.

### *Alternate Church Attendance*

Are Armenian-Americans more likely to attend a non-Armenian church? Only 3 percent of respondents affiliated with the Apostolic church attend a non-Armenian church almost always, 16 percent of the Armenian Protestants, 46 percent of the Armenian Catholics, 63 percent of those who are affiliated with "other" denominations. Only 8 percent of those who profess no religious persuasions attend an alternate church some of the time, none of them frequently. Apostolics have no set preferences in attending an alternate church, some attend Roman Catholic churches (16 percent), some Protestant churches (15 percent). On the other hand, 39 percent of Armenian Protestants attend "American" Protestant churches, and 59 percent of Armenian Catholics attend Roman Catholic churches. The "other" category consisted mostly of members of mainstream Protestant denominations (71 percent).

At the turn of the century, Mirak estimated that approximately 80 percent of the Armenian immigrants in the United States belonged to the Apostolic church, while the Protestants made up the remaining 15 to 20 percent. The Armenian Catholics who came to America at that early date were too few to make up a separate community (see Mirak 1983, 195).[51] Given the estimates for the early twentieth century provided by Mirak and those of the New York study in religious affiliation, the attrition rate of the Armenian Protestant church can be calculated to be, in the least, double that of the Armenian Apostolic church.[52] Conversions to mainstream Protestant denominations were easier for the Armenian Protestants.[53] For example, a fifty-six-year-old woman said: "My father's family were devout Evangelicals,

making it easier to assimilate with the local Congregational church." Another forty-seven-year-old second-generation woman wrote: "I am a Presbyterian by birth—as were my parents (both Armenian). My grandparents adopted this religion." Mirak's historical evidence corroborates these conclusions:

> [The] Apostolic Church stressed the preservation of the old culture in the New World. Repeatedly, the Apostolic priests emphasized fidelity to Armenian traditions, the language, the family, and marriage within the group. By contrast, the Protestants acted as a willing acculturating mechanism in the New World. The Protestants did not emphasize the need to keep the old language and culture. Rather, while seeking to bring the Armenians to Christ, they promoted the adoption of New World and American ways. (1983,198-99)

Since Armenian Catholics attend Roman Catholic churches and Armenian Protestants attend Presbyterian, Episcopalian,[54] and other Protestant denominations (see chap. 1 for percentages), these results confirm Will Herberg's (1960) thesis. Herberg argued that individuals have a need to belong in some type of a community. At the turn of the century, this need had been fulfilled by affiliation with an immigrant group. However, with increasing assimilation by midcentury, religious congregations were replacing immigrant communities as social anchors. Herberg explains:

> To find a place in American society increasingly means to place oneself in one or another of these religious communities. And although this process of self-identification and social location is not in itself intrinsically religious, the mere fact that in order to be "something" one must be either a Protestant, a Catholic, or a Jew means that one begins to think of oneself as religiously identified and affiliated. (1960, 56)

The tripartite melting pot, however, excludes adherents of Orthodox churches. Though a minority in the United States, an Orthodox community free of ethnic colorings has been suggested as a fourth division in Herberg's model because of doctrinaire and stylistic differences with the Protestants and Catholics (see Kayal 1970, 459-60; Guroian 1987, 166-78).

There is no evidence of Pan-Orthodoxy in America in the near future. None of the respondents said they belonged to an Orthodox church other than the Armenian Apostolic church, and only 2.4 percent said they occasionally attended Greek, Russian, or Bulgarian Orthodox church services because it was their spouse's religion or

they lived close to such a church. The Armenian Apostolic clergy I interviewed were opposed to the idea of American Orthodoxy. As one clergyman told me: "We fear cutting the tie to the Middle East. We have to keep the Armenian church tied to its patrimony." Moreover, the other ethnic Orthodox churches are equally reluctant to advocate Pan-Orthodoxy (see Kayal 1970; Scourby 1980; Moskos 1989, 34-35). Herberg's tripartite model remains viable (see also Kayal 1983, 49).

What is the rationale for attending a non-Armenian church? Respondents affiliated with Armenian denominations cite "convenience" as the prime cause for attending a non-Armenian church (23 percent for Apostolics and Protestants, 30 percent for Catholics) while those with "other" affiliations cite membership (45 percent). Other reasons such as "spouse's church" are less significant for those belonging to ethnic churches, except for those with "no religion" (14 percent).[55] Doctrinaire reasons such as appreciating the teachings of a church or enjoying the service are least important for Apostolics. Less than 3 percent of Apostolics are members of non-Armenian churches; this figure increases to almost 8 percent for Armenian Protestants, and 30 percent for Armenian Catholics (see table 2.4).

Mixed ancestry and generational presence in the United States do not necessarily increase a person's attendance in an alternative church, but do open the door to those leaving organized religion. Interestingly,

**TABLE 2.4**
**Frequency Distribution of Rationale for Attending Alternate Church by Religious Affiliation**

| | Apostolic Armenian | Protestant Armenian | Catholic Armenian | Other (Non-Arm.) | No Religion |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 559 | (364) | (52) | (20) | (87) | (36) |
| Convenience | 23.1 | 23.1 | 30.0 | 14.9 | 5.6 |
| For Teachings | 6.3 | 15.4 | 15.0 | 19.5 | 2.8 |
| Member | 2.7 | 7.7 | 30.0 | 44.8 | 2.8 |
| Spouse's church | 5.2 | 1.9 | 5.0 | 10.3 | 13.9 |
| Special event | 7.7 | 11.5 | 0.0 | 3.4 | 8.3 |
| Not applicable | 54.9 | 40.4 | 20.0 | 6.9 | 66.7 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

those in later generations were not more likely to attend an alternate church, the correlation was not statistically significant. Yet, 16 percent of respondents who had an Armenian mother and father "never" attended an Armenian church compared to 53 percent of those with mixed ancestry. Also, while 27 percent of the former attended an Armenian church at least once a month, only 15 percent of the latter did so. Moreover, 68 percent of those with two Armenian parents "hardly ever" attend an alternate church compared to 53 percent of those with one Armenian parent. Generally, those who attend "most frequently" are most likely to be children of mixed ancestry (14 percent vs. 26 percent). This suggests that a generational decrease in Armenian church attendance does not necessarily mean a generational increase in alternate church attendance. The relationship between an individual's ancestry and church affiliation is not a simple one; an increase in intermarriage does not increase affiliation in non-Armenian denominational congregations. Rather, I hypothesize that the "no religion" category is more likely to increase in the future.

While almost none of the respondents gave any reasons to justify their attending an Armenian church, many did write to explain how they started attending a non-Armenian church. Few wished they could attend Armenian church more frequently; such was the case of a eighty-five-years-old foreign-born woman who said, "I depend on my family to take me, otherwise I'd go more often." The most frequent reason given for attending non-Armenian church was distance from home,[56] especially if the family has young children and is desirous of giving them a Christian education.[57] For example, a seventy-three-year-old woman, who immigrated as a child, attends a Baptist church at present. She wrote: "I started Sunday School in a Baptist church near our home at the age of 13. My friends had tried for quite a while to get me to go, my mother finally decided to let me rather than no religion training at all."

Another sixty-four-year-old second-generation woman who also goes to a Baptist church explained that she grew up in Maine where there were no Armenian churches.[58] Such is the case of a forty-seven-year-old second-generation woman who wrote: "I believe in a local church. If there was an Armenian Presbyterian-Protestant church in our community, I would go there.... Nearest [Armenian] church is 73 miles one way. A thirty-year-old third-generation woman similarly

said: "When we were young we moved to a new town and began to attend the Trinity Reformed Church. My parents said it was due to convenience. The Armenian church was approximately 35 minutes away by car. Nevertheless, we visited St ... Armenian Church in ... , NJ 2-3 times per year and we were able to make a few friends through the years."

Like ethnic identity, attending an ethnic church is situational. Most of all, it must be physically feasible. A sixty-three-year-old second-generation woman who lived in Ohio for thirty years before retiring in New York City where she grew up, said she used to attend the local Presbyterian church in Ohio because "it was close to our home and the closest Armenian church was 2 hrs away." She now attends an Armenian church. A forty-five-year-old man who with his mother are U.S.-born, wrote: "Was brought up in the Episcopalian church. Have regularly attended the Armenian church only in the last 10 years and since our children started Sunday School." It might be relevant to mention that this man's wife is also of Armenian descent. He and his family might have behaved differently if she was not.

### *Attitudes Toward Armenian Church*

In response to attitude statements on the Armenian church (table 2.5), about 55 percent of the New York sample agreed with the first statement: "If the Armenian Church does not use English in its services, the American-born youth will stop coming to church." This is to be expected because 25 percent of respondents do not speak and 60 percent do not read and write Armenian, and the percentages are much higher with later generations and younger cohorts. Only about 30 percent of respondents (mostly foreign-born) do not want to change the church language. Another 15 percent have no opinion, most of them in the third and fourth generation. I suspect that these are people who are so alienated from the church that such issues do not even command their attention or concern. The generational status, the age cohort, the ancestry, the socioeconomic background were not significantly correlated with the first statement.

Several respondents would have agreed with the thirty-five-year-old second-generation man who said: "the language used in church is, I think, irrelevant to the youth." It should be noted that the language of

the Divine Liturgy in the Apostolic church is in classical Armenian; it is not even fully understood by those who speak conversational Armenian. However, there is a reluctance to use English exclusively. At present, in most churches the gospel readings and the sermon are often bilingual. There are some who believe that maintaining the use of the Armenian language is essential for identity.[59]

Similarly, about 51 percent of the sample agreed with the second statement that said, "Armenian priests should preach only the Holy Scriptures in their sermons and not concern themselves with Armenian issues." Respondent's education (.19*), occupation (.16*), age (.15*) and not generational presence in the United States were most significantly associated with this statement. It is very interesting that the higher the educational level, the less the respondent advocated a separation of church and state. This is contrary to assumptions in the ethnicity literature that the higher the socioeconomic background the less the ethnic commitment. Thirty-one percent of those who did not finish high school wanted to keep the ethnic component in the church,

**TABLE 2.5**
**Frequencies of Respondents Scoring "High" (Ethnic Position) on Four Attitude Measures of Sacred Culture by Generation**
**(in percent)**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 579-582 | (216) | (272) | (36) | (41) | (16) |
| Statement 1 | 36.6 | 27.6 | 30.5 | 17.1 | 31.3 |
| Statement 2 | 51.8 | 47.6 | 58.3 | 58.4 | 53.3 |
| Statement 3 | 81.6 | 62.1 | 44.4 | 48.8 | 37.5 |
| Statement 4 | 76.6 | 43.3 | 38.9 | 29.3 | 18.8 |

Statement 1: "If the Armenian Church does not use English in it services, the American-born youth will stop coming to church."

Statement 2: "Armenian priests should preach only the Holy Scriptures in their sermons and not concern themselves with Armenian issues."

Statement 3: "It is every Armenian's duty to support the Armenian national church morally and financially."

Statement 4: "Our people should get their families to the Armenian church on Sundays, even if it is far from one's home."

as did 42 percent of those with high school, 46 percent of respondents with some college, 55 percent of those who completed college, and 65 percent of those with more than college education. Similarly, traditional professionals were most likely to endorse Armenian nationalism in the church. Younger age cohorts were more likely to hold an ethnic position. About 59 percent of those below age forty disagreed to separation of sacred from secular, compared to 33 percent of those above seventy years of age. These results are hard to interpret, except to suggest that there is attitudinal, if not behavioral, support for the continuation of Armenian churches.

Overall, 67 percent of the sample concurred that "it is every Armenian's duty to support the Armenian National church morally and financially." Least likely to agree were those who were affiliated with non-Armenian churches (.41*), those in later generations (.27*), and those indifferent to Armenian political ideologies (.24*). Almost 54 percent of the sample agreed that "our people should get their families to the Armenian church on Sundays even if it is far from one's home." Again, those least likely to agree were those in nonethnic religious categories (.39*), those in later generations (.38*), those with higher education (.24*), and those indifferent to ethnic politics (.20*). There is about a 50 percent drop between the foreign-born generation and the fourth generation in willingness to support the

**TABLE 2.6**
**Frequencies of Respondents Scoring "High" (Ethnic Position) on Four Attitude Measures of Sacred Culture by Religious Affiliation**
**(in percent)**

| | Apostolic Armenian | Protestant Armenian | Catholic Armenian | Other (Non-Arm.) | No Religion |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 572-574 | (370) | (56) | (21) | (92) | (35) |
| Statement 1 | 81.9 | 46.4 | 85.7 | 27.2 | 34.3 |
| Statement 1 | 67.1 | 58.9 | 54.5 | 12.2 | 17.1 |

Statement 1: "It is every Armenian's duty to support the Armenian national church morally and financially."
Statement 2: "Our people should get their families to the Armenian church on Sundays even if it is far from one's home."

church. The drop is even greater for attending an Armenian church in spite of distance; from 77 percent for foreign-born to 19 percent for fourth generation.

Overall, respondents were more likely to strongly agree that it is every Armenian's duty to support the Armenian church than they were to support the attitude that families should attend Armenian church irrespective of the distance because the latter is more demanding. One can support the church by occasional attendance and sending in contributions, but going every Sunday to church is a different matter (see tables 2.5 and 2.6). As mentioned above, several respondents became members of non-Armenian churches primarily because they lived far away from an Armenian church. These responses are in the predicted direction. It should be noted that in the study area there are a total of nineteen Armenian parishes which makes it geographically feasible for most (especially the Apostolics) to attend regularly, unlike Armenians living in Knoxville (TN) or Charleston (SC) who, of course, have a valid excuse not to.

Though not without criticism on the efficiency of the Armenian church in America, respondents in the survey were aware of the dual role of the church as a preserver of sacred and secular culture. However, it should be noted that this support comes overwhelmingly from the first and second-generations. A fifty-four-year-old second-generation man wrote:

> The church is the instrument that has kept the people together all these years. (Even though I am an atheist I make donations to the church because it is the center of our people).... To keep the sheep in the church, the church will have to lighten up, English sermons, priest that can relate to young people, you have to sell the church as a product to keep the people coming.

Another second-generation respondent wrote:

> I also firmly believe that the Armenian church is the most important part of our Ethnicity.... The Armenian church is unique. It will keep Armenians Armenian.

And again, a forty-year-old man who with his mother are U.S.-born wrote:

> I wanted to point out that, although we are relatively inactive in Armenian circles, we do feel very close to the church (which is a considerable distance from our home). We feel that the church serves both spiritual and cultural functions. The

church is the glue that preserves the Armenians' ethnic identity in this country. The church and family are very much intertwined and lets hope it stays that way.

The Armenian Apostolic church in the United States, more than the Armenian Catholic and Protestant churches, has taken on the responsibility[60] of preserving the Armenian culture, but it is also better equipped to do so beyond the immigrant generation. The Apostolic church has its unique sacred traditions. The Armenian Protestant and Catholic churches, on the other hand, risk losing their distinctiveness once their ethnic component is removed. The Armenian Protestant church, for instance, contends that the role of the church is not to be a guardian of the secular culture: the history, the language, the arts, etc. An Armenian Protestant pastor pointed out to me during an interview that the main function of his church is "the provision of spiritual needs of the Armenian people." He went on to add: "The 'mother [Apostolic] church' perceives the church as a cultural enhancer in a foreign land.... It is not the church's responsibility to strengthen the culture. Schools and clubs should not be run in conjunction to the church. They should be separate."

Nonetheless, an ethnic church operating under the principle of religious distinctiveness is a more acceptable form of diversity than ethnic separateness (see Kayal 1973, 417); that is, American society encourages ethnic communities to become church communities. The case of the Melkite Church in America is illuminating. Though the Melkite Church is in communion with the Vatican, it is not a Latin but an Eastern Rite church, historically the church of the "Catholics" of the Near East. In the United States, the Melkites, like most immigrants wanting to be socially acceptable and upwardly mobile, latinized their religious traditions to become doctrinally and stylistically similar to any Catholic church in America. Instead of a religiously separate church, they became an ethnic church like the Italian Catholics or Polish Catholics. They substituted a new ethnic/national identity for the religious one. However, becoming Syrian Catholics was in the long run more vulnerable to assimilation (see Kayal 1970, 1983).

The Armenian Apostolic church in the United States has been the primary instrument by which structurally and culturally ethnicity is translated into behavioral expressions (Kernaklian 1967, 91). It has been more successful in retaining its adherents than the Armenian

Protestants and Catholics and continues to claim the biggest proportion of those who identify as Armenians in the diaspora (see Phillips 1978, 278). However, it cannot afford to rest on its laurels. The New York data suggests that later-generation descendants are less likely than their parents and grandparents to take their religious affiliations for granted. Mirak explains the inherent conflict in the Apostolic church: "[The Apostolic church] stood staunchly and resolutely for the preservation in toto of the Old; this was its historic justification, its rationale, and a source of its weakness" (1983, 201).

The influx of new immigrants has only postponed the crisis within the Apostolic church. These Armenian-speaking (and -reading) immigrants have supplied members to church councils and choirs; served as acolytes, deacons, and priests; and filled the pews on Sundays. But they have introduced a conservative influence that has alienated the American-born in later generations even more. Instead of forming a partnership between the different segments of the population, in some parishes the American-born have typically abdicated their role, leaving the institutions in the care of a handful of relatively recent newcomers. As a third-generation informant who is highly active in the community told me: "We let them, it shouldn't have been so easy." However, in other parishes, the second-generation have maintained hegemony over church councils, keeping both the post-1965 immigrants and their own children's generation out.

The church cannot rely on a constant stream of immigrants to fill its ranks. The time has come for the Apostolic church to modernize its sacred traditions. From an archaic institution, it needs to become a living institution, responsive to the spiritual needs of the men and women of Armenian descent, their increasingly *odar* (non-Armenian) spouses, and their mixed-bred children living in contemporary United States. In doing so, the church may in the short term lose some of its adherents who are nominally Christian, but in the long term, it will be serving the real religious needs of those who flock to it, by choice, for solace, inspiration and communion.

### *Sacred Traditions*

The Armenian church as a formally organized religion has played a major role in maintaining the language and culture of the Armenian

people throughout their history. But equally important have been what Susan Pattie calls "religious" beliefs and practices, the little traditions, such as the celebration of saint's names and the use of religious vocabulary in everyday conversation, keeping Lent, and fasting before communion. These sacred traditions were part of the seasonal life cycle of preimmigration Armenian culture in Asia Minor at the turn of the twentieth century and were kept alive afterwards in the Middle Eastern diaspora to a great extent. For example, a man named Vartan or Sarkis would be congratulated *(anoonoved abrees)* and a festive meal for kin and friends would be held for him on *Vartanantz* or *Sourp Sarkis* (St Vartan, St Sarkis); the actual saint's day, being in relation to Easter, is not fixed. A Mariam's name day celebration would be on the Sunday nearest August 15, *Asdvadzadzin* (the Feast of Assumption). In the contemporary United States, this tradition is dying out for a number of pragmatic reasons. These days, parents are less likely to name their baby boys Vartan or Sarkis, but more significantly, since few Armenian-American households in later generations are likely to have access to an Armenian church calendar, they (let alone their *odar* [non-American] friends) may not even know the exact date of these saints' days. Similarly, ordinary speech is no longer peppered with religious vocabulary. Since few American-born Armenians speak the language, words like *Asvadz bahe* ("God keep him/her"), *Asdoudzme pareen* ("God send you good things"), *Asvadz hokeen lousavoree* ("God rest his soul"), and *Asvadz ouzene* ("God willing") are automatically lost (see also Pattie 1990, 311). Such ancient idioms sound strange in a secularized society like that of the United States. Besides, they lose much of their charm in translation.

To measure the maintenance of sacred traditions, New York respondents were asked how frequently they abstained from food the day they planned to take communion. A more demanding behavioral tradition in the Armenian church/culture is the custom of keeping the forty days of Lent, that is, refraining from eating meat (including fish) and all meat products. Respondents were asked how often they fasted or abstained from animal products or other items[61] during Lent or Holy Week before Easter. Evidently, it is easier to fast for a few hours before taking communion than to keep Lent. Therefore, the question was asked in a liberal way; keeping Holy Week before Easter was considered sufficient.

As expected, more people answered affirmatively to the question about abstaining before communion than to keeping Lent. Nonetheless, the percentages of those who almost always fast before communion are remarkably small. Overall, 34 percent of the sample abstain, almost always, before taking communion, compared to 16 percent who fast or keep Lent, frequently. There are few generational and age differences between respondents who said they abstain before communion, except for the very youngest cohort, who are least likely to do so. About 20 percent of the foreign-born generation keep Lent, 14 percent of the second generation, 11 percent of those with one U.S.-born parent, 19 percent of those with two U.S.-born parents, and 6 percent of those with U.S.-born grandparents. The proscription of each denomination is the most important factor in whether one keeps sacred traditions or not. While nearly 45 percent of Armenian Apostolics and Catholics abstain from food before communion, only 5.5 percent of the Armenian Protestants do so, because their church does not require it. In keeping Lent, the Catholic injunction is a stronger norm than the Apostolic one. Therefore, only 17.5 percent of Apostolics keep Lent compared to nearly 55 percent of Armenian Catholics. The Protestants trail further behind.

In conclusion, the Armenian Apostolic church continues to be the bulwark of Armenianness in America at the present time, though the passing of generations is a threat that cannot be ignored. As predicted, later generations had the lowest rates of church attendance. Armenian Protestant and Catholic churches are less resistant to assimilation; their attrition rates were estimated to be at least twice those of the Apostolics. About two-thirds of the respondents consider it their duty to support the church, but slightly more than half (mostly the foreign-born and their children's generation) would be willing to travel long distances to attend regularly (probably fewer proportions would actually do so). Most agree that more English should be used in the service; evidently, a two- to three-hour service in a language one does not understand is not a very meaningful or pleasant experience. Certainly, it is not to be repeated often. The Armenian church has been a "communal" church, and most want it to continue as such; however, younger cohorts would like to understand the doctrines of the church rather than blindly follow their ancestral faith. Finally, few people maintain sacred traditions because they are demanding and

inconvenient. Most significantly, individual forms of expressing one's Armenianness are increasing; acknowledging Armenian descent does not automatically make a person a member of an Armenian church. Overall, there was little verbal renunciation of the sacred culture, but behavioral indicators tell a different story.

## Maintenance of Armenian Political Culture

In summing up the experience of the early Armenian immigrants to the United States, Mirak wrote: "[Their] distinguishing characteristic was the intensity of their inner political life.... [They] inherited a bitter, cataclysmic irredentist struggle which generated passionate battles in the community. The conflicts ... left deep cleavages in their lives, and these cleavages would continue to disrupt community life for decades" (1983, 286). I have already described above that this violent, vicious strife was so pervasive that it divided the Armenian communal structures in the diaspora roughly into two factions: Tashnags and anti-Tashnags. Therefore, the questions that need to be addressed are: To what extent are these traditional political and ideological orientations being maintained at present? How has this political and ideological culture affected the manifestation of Armenianness?

It is generally postulated that an immersion in the ethnic milieu precludes participation in the larger society. Not true! The New York survey reveals that Armenian political parties and traditional ideological orientations have not been resistant to the forces of assimilation. Armenian-Americans are citizens of the United States of America; as such they exercise and are conscious of their political rights and responsibilities. In fact, the vast majority realize that their membership in the larger society has more serious repercussions on their daily lives and livelihoods than their membership in the Armenian world.

For the first and second generations, Armenian-Americans are equally at home in Armenian and American politics. However, in later generations, ethnic political parties cease to be functional or meaningful to them. Therefore, they are no longer active participants. Yet, many maintain emotional ties to their ancestral background and may, whenever convenient, become symbolically involved, through

monetary contributions, writing letters to Congress, or providing technological expertise to earthquake victims. Additionally, with the creation of the Republic of Armenia, there are prospects of mobilizing Armenian-Americans into an "interest" group.

*Retention of Traditional Political Orientations*

Less than 3 percent of respondents were official members of Armenian political parties.[62] However, almost half (49 percent) of them sympathized with either one of the three parties or took a *chezok* (nonpartisan or neutral) position in the conflict, which was demonstrated to be a euphemism for the anti-Tashnag side. Specifically, 1 percent sympathized with the Hunchags, 4.8 percent with the Ramgavars, 18.7 percent with the Tashnags, 24.5 percent said they were *chezok*. By contrast, 30.3 percent were indifferent to Armenian politics, 12.2 percent rejected all parties, and the remaining 9.6 percent did not know or gave no answer (see totals column table 2.7).

Sympathy to Armenian political parties and ideologies was significantly correlated with generational presence in the United States (.19*; table 1.6 in chap. 1). Sympathy to the Hunchag and Ramgavar parties is predominantly a foreign-born phenomenon. The Tashnag party also gets most of its supporters from the foreign-born; however, their

**TABLE 2.7**
**Frequency Distribution of Sympathy to Armenian Political Parties and Ideologies by Ancestry**

| | Both Parents Armenian | One Parent Armenian | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| N = | (518) | (66) | (584) |
| Hunchag | 1.0 | 1.5 | 1.0 |
| Ramgavar | 5.2 | 1.5 | 4.8 |
| Tashnag | 20.8 | 1.5 | 18.7 |
| Neutral *(Chezok)* | 25.7 | 15.2 | 24.5 |
| Indifferent | 28.0 | 48.5 | 30.3 |
| Rejects all parties | 11.0 | 21.2 | 12.2 |
| (No answer) | 8.3 | 10.6 | 8.6 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

socialization techniques must be more effective than the others or their ideology more meaningful, because they are able to sustain partisans until the third generation. Yet, there is a remarkable monotonic decrease with each passing generation. Accelerating with the second generation, the proportion of respondents who are indifferent to Armenian politics increases dramatically. Likewise, those who reject parties and those in the "no response" category are mostly later-generation descendants who have little knowledge of the issues.

Sympathy to Armenian politics is also significantly related to religious affiliation (.21*). The majority of the non-Apostolic respondents in this survey (75.5 percent) did not favor any of the ideological positions. Respondents with non-Armenian church affiliations and "no religion" were even less (82 percent) sympathetic to Armenian politics (see table 1.11 in chap. 1). This is not surprising, because as mentioned above, the conflict was fought out within the Armenian Apostolic church. Those who are affiliated to the National church are more prone to be aware of the consequences of the schism. In choosing to attend one Apostolic church over another, willingly or unwillingly, one makes a political decision. Similarly, having a non-Armenian parent drastically decreases the chances of a respondent's partisanship (.13*; see table 2.7). Only 4.5 percent of respondents with mixed ancestry favored one or the other of the parties, nearly 50 percent said they were indifferent.

**TABLE 2.8**
**Frequency Distribution of Sympathy to Armenian Political Parties and Ideologies by Place of Birth**

| | United States | Turkey | Middle East | Soviet Bloc | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 584 | (351) | (90) | (110) | (22) | (11) |
| Hunchag | 0.9 | 2.2 | 0.9 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Ramgavar | 4.0 | 7.8 | 5.5 | 0.0 | 9.1 |
| Tashnag | 12.3 | 18.9 | 31.8 | 40.9 | 45.5 |
| *Chezok* | 19.7 | 41.1 | 27.3 | 31.8 | 0.0 |
| Indifferent | 41.6 | 8.9 | 16.4 | 13.6 | 18.2 |
| Rejects all parties | 13.4 | 13.3 | 8.2 | 4.5 | 18.2 |
| (No answer) | 8.3 | 7.8 | 10.0 | 9.1 | 9.1 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Table 2.8 shows the frequency distribution of sympathy to Armenian politics by country of birth of respondents. It confirms that the majority of the followers of Armenian political parties and ideologies are foreign-born. Respondents born in Soviet Bloc countries are most likely to be pro-Tashnags. The one-time staunch anti-Soviet policies of the Tashnag party seem to have found ready allies in those who have experienced firsthand the Soviet system. Also, Armenians from the Middle East, especially from Lebanon and Syria, are more likely to be politicized. Ascribed ethnicity in those countries, the influential presence of Armenian political parties, and the historical incidences such as the bloody battles in Lebanon in 1958 have sensitized Middle Eastern Armenians.

Immigrants from Turkey, especially recent ones, are less political. As previously mentioned, for the few Armenians who remained in Turkey after the Genocide, community life was predominantly centered around the family (and the church for those in Istanbul), it precluded any form of political consciousness. By contrast, Turkish-born old-timers who immigrated to the United States before the 1920s are more likely to be politicized. They are also more likely to have witnessed the fights that split the Armenian-American community in 1933.

Occupation, education, and income are not significantly related to sympathy to Armenian political ideologies. The socioeconomic background of the members and advocates of the Hunchags, Ramgavars, and Tashnags appear to be similar: middle to upper middle class. This is a tremendous change from their class origins in the early twentieth century. As explained before, while the Ramgavar party spoke for the bourgeoisie, the Tashnags were spokesmen for the less privileged classes: the peasants, the artisans, and the intellectuals. I suspect that the situation in Greater Los Angeles is somewhat different. There are higher proportions of working-class and lower-middle-class Armenians because of the influx of new immigrants from the Middle East and Soviet Armenia. Undoubtedly, many of the former have carried with them their political affiliations and ideologies, reinstating their membership in Los Angeles branches.

There were three attitude statements that measured the political and ideological traditionalism of the men and women of Armenian descent who participated in this study. The first statement was: "The division

of the Armenian community into various political groups, such as Hunchags, Ramgavars, Tashnags is irrelevant in this day and age." The second statement said: "I attend the Armenian church closest to my home, whether or not I sympathize with Echmiadzin or Antelias." The last statement read: "I attend the activities that interest me in the Armenian community no matter what the political affiliation of the organization sponsoring the activity." Irrespective of generational presence, ancestry, age, and socioeconomic background, on average, 65 percent of the sample found the split within the Armenian community to be irrelevant to this day and age (22 percent disagreed).

It is noteworthy that on all these statements, high proportions of respondents had no opinion (or did not answer). Later-generation respondents and those with mixed ancestry were most likely to say they do not know (see table 2.9). For example, 53 percent of respondents with two U.S.-born parents and 88 percent with U.S.-born grandparents preferred to have "no opinion" on the second statement, that is, attending the closest Armenian church irrespective of political sympathies. Similarly, third- and fourth-generation respondents averaged 32 percent of "no opinion" category on the third statement, that is, attending any activity no matter the political affiliation of the association sponsoring it. All three attitude statements on the schism within the Armenian community were most meaningful to first- and second-generation respondents.

Several respondents, in later generations and children of mixed marriages, wrote to say that they were not familiar with any of the political parties mentioned in the questionnaire. For example, a young woman whose father is a U.S.-born Armenian and whose mother is Italian wrote: "I do not understand any." A middle-aged woman whose mother, like her, is U.S.-born said: "I cannot sympathize with any political divisions primarily because I have no pertinent knowledge of any of them." Other respondents wrote, "I am *totally* unknowledgeable on all these groups," or "Not familiar with these organizations," or statements to that effect (emphasis in original). A forty-one-year-old man whose father is English and mother American-born Armenian wrote, "Have a lack of sympathy for the divisions. For one thing I can never get them all straight in my mind. For a race with a small population, Armenians seem to have more division per capita than any other race!"

Respondents found the effect of the political divisions within the Armenian community to be destructive[63] and a thing of the past. A forty-five-year-old woman who came from Turkey at age twelve wrote, "We have no room nor reason to pursue these political prejudices. They may have had a purpose in the past. At present, they will only weaken us even more as it's done so in the past." A fifty-five-year-old, third-generation woman observed that the division "has made them [the Armenians] so hateful—I detest this nonsense." A second-generation man wrote: "It's a thing of the past and should be forgotten." Yet another second-generation, middle-aged woman said that ethnic "political parties are obsolete in U.S.A. today." A community leader I interviewed also expressed the view that there is no future for Armenian political parties in the United States. He compared the situation in Lebanon with that of the United States. In Lebanon, political parties had to replace inefficient governmental agencies in dealing with the Armenian population, from marital disputes to obtaining a passport. In contrast, in the United States,

**TABLE 2.9**
**Frequencies of Respondents Rejecting Armenian Communal Schism (and Those with No Opinion) Measured Through Three Attitude Statements by Generation (in percent)**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 561-577 | (215) | (269) | (36) | (41) | (16) |
| Statement 1 | 62.3 | 67.3 | 69.4 | 63.4 | 43.8 |
| (No opinion) | (13.0) | (13.0) | (8.3) | (24.4) | (25.0) |
| Statement 2 | 55.9 | 31.4 | 42.4 | 30.0 | 0.0 |
| (No opinion) | (17.1) | (33.3) | (30.3) | (52.5) | (87.5 ) |
| Statement 3 | 75.0 | 59.5 | 47.2 | 51.2 | 40.0 |
| (No opinion) | (7.9) | (22.1) | (38.8) | (34.1) | (33.3) |

Statement 1: "The division of the Armenian community into various political groups, such as Hunchags, Ramgavars, and Tashnags is irrelevant in this day and age."
Statement 2: "I attend the Armenian church closest to my home, whether or not I sympathize with Echmiadzin or Antelias."
Statement 3: "I attend the activities that interest me in the Armenian community no matter what the political affiliation of the organization sponsoring the activity."

ethnic political parties do not fulfill any functions necessary for the survival of their people.

Interestingly, the immigrant generation, no matter where respondents were born, were more likely than the U.S.-born to say that they would attend the Armenian church nearest their home whatever its political colorings.[64] I find that second-generation respondents are most likely to uphold the schism. This can be interpreted by the historical circumstances that many of the second-generation respondents witnessed while growing up: the 1933 murder of Archbishop Tourian that officially split the Apostolic church in America and the subsequent Cold War era. The reader is reminded that 83 percent of second-generation respondents were over fifty years of age. This behavior is a cohort effect.

As a result of childhood socialization, network connections, and habit, many Armenian-Americans inadvertently perpetuate the political and ideological schisms within the community by being members of one church rather than another; by supporting the social, cultural, educational activities, and fund-raising events of one association rather than the opposing one, and contributing financially or otherwise to projects and organizations of one faction instead of the rival ones. Preferences to Tashnag and anti-Tashnag orientations are mostly inherited, as several respondents in this survey remarked. For example, a middle-aged, second-generation woman wrote that she sympathized with the Ramgavar party "only because of my late father." Another woman declared a preference to the Tashnag Party, but she went on to say: "[It is] because of my parents. I feel somehow indifferent now." Again, a middle-aged, second-generation woman wrote that her father was a Tashnag. She added, "I still feel some sympathy but not for what they are today." Often the sympathy of American-born generations to Armenian political parties is not so much to the present performance of the parties, but in memory of their parents and the ideals they held.

Many Armenian-Americans unintentionally contain their social relations with other Armenians to the confines of one faction, as the present data illustrates. The Armenians they know and meet in their leisure time, such as family, relatives, friends, or acquaintances, happen to belong, in general, to the same churches and auxiliary associations as themselves (see also O'Grady 1979, 51). Attending a

church service, a lecture, a concert, or a fund-raiser has a latent function of establishing and maintaining kinship and friendship ties. Considering the finite amount of time and energy (and finances) one has, one goes to the events where one is more likely to meet familiar faces and feel welcomed.

Some men and women, because of their close relationships and their ability to move freely in either "side," become brokers between the two factions. O'Grady (1979, 51-54) found that there are different categories of brokers. There are those who by virtue of being married into the opposing faction become brokers. People associated with the arts are coveted by all organizations; they too become intermediaries. There are also organizations, such as professional and student groups, that attract people from both factions. Ties between the two factions are not completely severed; however, conversions from one "side" to the other are rare. It is hard to find a person who was raised as a

**TABLE 2.10**
**Reasons Favoring Church Unity**

| | percent |
|---|---|
| Eliminate image of division, more power | 45 |
| Reduce waste and duplication of resources | 38 |
| Strengthen identity, one nation, one church | 28 |
| Reduce assimilation, and keep youth in fold | 23 |
| Promote larger church attendance | 11 |
| Eliminate political domination | 10 |
| Improve cultural efforts, schools, etc | 10 |
| Strengthen Christianity and religion | 7 |

**Reasons Opposing Church Unity**

| | percent |
|---|---|
| Armenians are too split to unite | 12 |
| Power struggle will always continue | 4 |
| Competition is good | 3 |
| Political parties will dominate | 3 |
| Fear of Soviet influence | 1 |

Source: *Armenian Reporter*, 23 April 1987, p. 1.

Tashnag and became a Ramgavar and vice versa (see also Phillips 1978, 268).

*The Issue of Unity*

In recent decades, with the end of the Cold War and changing diasporan relations with Soviet Armenia, "Unity Talks" have been held intermittently between the two Apostolic church factions. A recent poll found that 93 percent of respondents favored the unification of Armenian churches under one jurisdiction; only 6 percent of respondents were unfavorable, the remaining one percent had no opinion (*Armenian Reporter*, 16 and 23 April 1987).[65] The breakdown by church affiliation is interesting: 4 percent of those affiliated with the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America and 12 percent of those affiliated with the Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America were opposed to unity. Furthermore, 61 percent of those who responded to the above survey were affiliated to the Diocese churches, 25 percent were affiliated to the Prelacy churches, 6 percent of respondents said they attended both churches, and the remaining 8 percent said they had no Armenian church affiliation.[66]

The most frequently stated reasons in favor of church unity are concerns for Armenian ethnicity, identity and fear of assimilation (see table 2.10). Unity is perceived to be more effective in projecting ethnic power and more efficient in terms of human and material resources. The poll does not specify the generational status of those who offered their views on unity, but I suspect a significant proportion to be from the first and second generations. In that respect, their answers are more comprehensible. As symbolic Armenians, they require that the administration of their institutions, whether or not religious, be unambiguous in their goals, rational in their procedures, and efficient in the allocation of human and material resources.

In the New York study, I did not ask any direct questions on unity within the Armenian Apostolic church; nonetheless, numerous respondents made comments on the issue, providing similar reasons to the ones mentioned in the above poll. A seventy-four-year-old immigrant woman who had come to the United States at age twelve, out of apprehension for the future of the Armenians, wrote:

> My only concern now is Armenian unity. I was very disappointed when they didn't unite on the 70th anniversary of the Genocide—in Washington. It's something I will always remember.... [I] am thankful there are intelligent young Armenians concerned about the past, present and future of the Armenians.

A seventy-eight-year-old U.S.-born man whose ancestors came from Bulgaria sent in a typed "open letter" that advocated unity in order to fight back against the Turks and prevent assimilation. Here are some excerpts from his letter:

> Dear Brother,
>
> Divided we have failed for 70 years, United we have a chance.
>
> The Turks are laughing at us, because we are struggling within ourselves. How can we fight the Turks? UNITY.

This letter further suggested that young Armenians should join ethnic organizations "otherwise *Odar* [foreign] country and none of our own, We are Lost."

On the other hand, a fifty-eight-year-old, second-generation man lamented the duplication of Armenian churches, implying the waste in resources. He wrote:

> The greatest harm done to the Armenian people is the stubbornness of the two factions (priests) of the Armenian church in not uniting. As an adolescent in Syracuse, NY, many years ago, there was no Armenian church. Post World War II, a church supporting Echmiadzin was established—within a year another church was established (Antelias). From zero to two in 1 1/2 years.

A forty-nine-year-old Lebanese-born woman would agree with the above quotation. Her fear though is assimilation. Here are her remarks:

> It is a shame that the Armenians are not forgetting their differences and working hand in hand to salvage Armenian ethnicity in America. I find it hard to believe that even in small towns where there are few Armenians (like Niagara Falls, NY) you find opposing Armenian churches next to each other and not working together.

Another middle-aged, second-generation man was concerned about unity because it could mean increased ethnic power for political action. Here are his comments:

> I am not a party (political) person and therefore not a real believer in the Armenian churches. Unfortunately, they are one and the same. The *old* guard Armenians are

> keeping the Armenians divided and forcing the churches to do the same. Fear of losing their power base, and *not* the love of Armenia or Armenians is the only reason they can have for these policies. Unfortunately the only thing they agree on is that the Turks massacred the Armenians. Even on this occasion they *cannot* forget their differences and have a united rally, a united religious service or a united effort to pressure legislation. (Emphasis in original)

Similarly, a second-generation man regrets the political impasse caused by the schism. He believes that "the murder of Archbishop Tourian ... has separated Armenians *forever*—politically we have not advanced 1 inch in 50 years. All groups stand firm on quicksand" (emphasis in original).

The concern for unity is an example of the changing conditions within the Armenian community in the United States. This does not mean that unity will be easy to achieve. As a matter of fact, several attempts have so far ended in failure. The Unity Poll presented above indicates that a maturing generation of American-born Armenians who continue to identify with their ancestral church and culture have come to perceive the schism within their community with more objectivity. They have come to realize the futility of animosity within their ranks and between the churches. To many Armenian-Americans the jurisdictional dispute within the church and the traditional political and ideological orientations must appear like the skeletal remains of a dinosaur, the vestiges of a bygone era.

### *Effect of Political Ideologies on Armenianness*

Having seen the frequencies of support for Armenian politics in the sample, both attitudinally and behaviorally, the question is: how have these sympathies to Armenian political ideologies affected the course of assimilation. In competing for the leadership of the Armenian community in the United States, the different political/ideological orientations vie for the ultimate task of ethnic maintenance. The loftier goals of an independent homeland, and the retribution for the loss of ancestral lands from the Turkish government remain latent; they do not exact the immediate energies and resources of the leadership and the community. It is a matter of emphasis as to which is the best way to maintain Armenianness in the United States; the idiom of organization is different for each faction. The Tashnags place more emphasis on culture, language and politics. Generally, the Tashnags

tend to be irreligious; given their socioeconomic and revolutionary roots, this is not surprising. On the other hand, the anti-Tashnags stress the importance of church affiliation. In accordance with their predominantly middle-class interests, the anti-Tashnags have opted for a "safer" form of ethnicity that does not disturb their hard-won status (see O'Grady 1979, 149-51).

Table 2.11 shows the relationship between sympathy to Armenian parties and selected measures of assimilation. It should be noted that the Hunchag and Ramgavar categories have been recoded into the "other parties." The assimilation variables selected here are: speaking and reading Armenian adequately to very well, attending Armenian church once a month or more, sending one's child(ren) to Armenian day schools instead of public (American) schools, attending requiem services on April 24, commemorating the Genocide, and attending public gatherings for the same occasion.

The evidence suggests that the ideologies have been able to influence ethnic maintenance until the second generation. By stressing different aspects of Armenian culture, the idiom of organization or locus of control of each party/ideology has created variations in the responses, though the differences are by small margins of less than 10

**TABLE 2.11**
**Frequency Distribution of Respondents with "High" Scores on Selected Measures of Assimilation (Ethnic Position) by Revised Classification of Sympathy to Armenian Political Parties**
**(in Percent)**

| | Tashnag | Other Parties | Neutral | Indifferent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 463 | (109) | (34) | (143) | (177) |
| Speak Armenian well | 93.6 | 85.3 | 90.2 | 54.8 |
| Read Armenian well | 65.1 | 55.8 | 48.9 | 18.1 |
| Attend Armenian church often | 28.0 | 33.3 | 29.4 | 19.2 |
| Favor Armenian education for children | 47.7 | 40.6 | 44.0 | 20.7 |
| Attend Requiem on April 24 | 64.2 | 61.7 | 49.0 | 19.2 |
| Attend public rally on April 24 | 47.7 | 38.2 | 31.5 | 13.6 |

percent. The Tashnag sympathizers have the highest rates of language maintenance and support for Armenian day-school education. They have the highest rates for attending public rallies and requiem services for April 24. However, they lag behind the anti-Tashnags and *chezoks* (neutrals) in regular church attendance. On average, being a partisan of any Armenian party or ideology increases one's involvement in "political" activities. Genocide commemoration rallies, even requiem services, can be designated as political behavior because they maintain the historical conflict with the Turkish government.

The Tashnags, anti-Tashnags, and *chezoks* (neutrals) stand in sharp contrast to the "indifferents." Less than one-fifth of the indifferents read Armenian, participate in Genocide commemoration services or attend public demonstrations, or attend church regularly. It is interesting, however, that over half of them speak Armenian adequately to very well. They are the most assimilated. In sum, political ideologies have been functional in the past for the immigrant generation and second generation if they are able to provide a focus for collective identity and a framework for organizing communal structures. But these political parties and ideologies have not been responsive to contemporary realities. Large proportions of Armenian-Americans in later generations no longer feel the holding power of traditions and nostalgia.

### *Armenian Case as Application of Simmel's Theory of Conflict*

The schism within the Armenian diasporan community is an excellent application of Georg Simmel's conceptualizations on the sociological nature of conflict. The schism has been long lasting and intense for a number of reasons. First, conflict within the Armenian community has established boundaries between Tashnags and anti-Tashnags by strengthening the consciousness, sense of separateness, and identity of each "side" (Coser 1956, 34). Second, feelings and the expression of hostility have prevented these boundaries from disappearing. Moreover, as Simmel notes, "hostilities are often consciously cultivated to guarantee existing conditions" (1955, 18).

Third, the conflict within the Armenian community can be described as nonrealistic conflict because it is "not directly related to a contentious issue and is not oriented toward the attainment of specific

results" (Coser 1956, 49). Nonrealistic conflicts often stem from originally realistic antagonisms that were denied expression and are perpetuated through socialization (Coser 1956, 54). Realistic conflicts are directed at objects that are the source of unmet demands or expectations of benefits. Functional alternatives, such as bargaining and compromise, can replace realistic conflict in achieving one's demands. However, in nonrealistic conflicts, the only functional alternative is in the choice of an adversary. Fourth, conflict has maintained the relationship within the social system by allowing members of each group to vent their frustrations at one another; otherwise, they might have despaired and withdrawn (Coser 1956, 47). As Simmel has written, "opposition gives us inner satisfaction, distraction, relief.... Our opposition makes us feel that we are not completely victims of circumstances" (1955, 19).

Simmel observed that in close social relationships there exists both converging and diverging tendencies, such as the feelings of love and hate in intimate relationships where the total personality is involved. This intensity produces greater violence in cases of disagreement and disloyalty. Similarly, in groups in which members are deeply committed to the group, conflict may become very violent. Furthermore, in such close relationships, because of frequent interaction, there are more occasions for feelings of hostility to explode (Simmel 1955, 23; Coser 1956, 60-65). In host societies, the closest social relations of Armenian immigrants were other Armenians; besides, their numerically small size contributed to their intensity of involvement and friction (see Coser 1956, 97).

Simmel found that "people who have many common features often do one another worse or 'wronger' wrong than complete strangers do" (1955, 44). For the Tashnags and anti-Tashnags, hostility was as rooted in their social ties to each other, their sense of belonging and unity as Armenians (Simmel 1955, 48), as it was in their survival as a people and as a culture. Finally, Simmel observed that when ideological considerations become important in a conflict, as in this case, when members of a group feel that they are not fighting for personal reasons but an ideal, the conflict becomes more radical and merciless (Coser 1956,118). In ideological conflicts, dissenters in each camp are not easily tolerated and are forced to withdraw (Coser 1956, 103). The descendants of Armenian immigrants to the United States

who do not endorse the traditional political and ideological orientations become alienated and eventually drop out of the ethnic community as the data clearly shows. The most assimilated respondents, by most of the indices used in this study, are those who were "indifferent" to Armenian political parties and ideologies.

To summarize then, according to Simmel, the conflict within the Armenian community is partly a direct result of the structural and ideological properties of the case. The small, close-knit structure of Armenian communities, the total involvement of immigrants in their ethnic group, their constant interaction, their vested interests in the future of the Armenian people and the Armenian culture, their sense of belongingness and identity, the objectification of conflict, among other causes, resulted in the strengthening of the boundaries that separated the Tashnags from the anti-Tashnags and dissipated their frustrations by displacing their goals from the less attainable enemy to each other. It became a nonrealistic conflict that functioned more as a tension release mechanism than as an attempt to achieve any specific results. For a short while, this conflict was able to maintain the system; however, in the long run, such a conflict-ridden system is more likely to lose momentum, rigidify, and be unable to change (or change as quickly and as effectively) in response to changes outside the Armenian community.

Some Armenians have tried to justify the continuous conflict in their community as functional. It is believed that the opposition of the political orientations and the competition in supporting two sets of churches and auxiliary organizations have kept the Armenian identity alive in the diaspora (O'Grady 1979, 153). This may have been true for the immigrant generation, but it has alienated their American-born descendants as this study testifies. Simmel would agree that such a conflict can be costly. If conflict rigidifies a system, thus preventing it from modifying its structure, values, and rules in order to adapt to changing conditions, then it becomes dysfunctional (see Coser 1956, 48).

Indeed, Tashnag and anti-Tashnag political orientations and ideologies do not reflect present sociopolitical realities and do not address the issues that the diaspora-born generations face. Phillips corroborates this by adding that "there is among the youth a disenchantment with the Armenian [political] institutions and a

demand for new institutions which will include all Armenian-Americans" (1978, 265). Two organizations, the Armenian Assembly of America and the Zoryan Institute for Contemporary Armenian Research and Documentation, may function as alternatives to the traditional political parties because they provide "American/symbolic" avenues of political and ideological expression for Armenian-Americans.

### *American Alternatives to Traditional Political Culture*

The Armenian Assembly of America is an organization that is the product of a maturing generation of Armenian-Americans—a generation of educated, professional, affluent Americans who are conscious of their Armenian heritage. The Armenian Assembly was founded in 1972 in Washington, DC by a small group of professional Armenians to represent and promote the interests of Armenians. In their own terms, it is "an information and resource center and liaison between the Armenian community and the American government."[67] The rationale behind the creation of the Armenian Assembly is best explained in the words of historian Richard Hovannisian, one of the founders of the Assembly.

> Successful through the sweat of their brows in creating many new opportunities for their children, the Armenian immigrant generation nonetheless failed to pass on the secrets contained within the Armenian alphabet, that is the key to Armenian history, Armenian literature, and Armenian existence. And even recent immigrants, who had attended Armenian schools in the Middle East and for whom the Armenian characters were not simply unintelligible hieroglyphics, found in a very short time that they had to face the same problems as American-born Armenians. The challenge of finding the means to preserve the existence of a people in the dispersion and to achieve their aspirations demanded attention.
>
> It was out of concern for themselves and their children and out of a growing awareness of the enormous potential existing within the Armenian-American community, with successful and talented people in the arts, media, medicine, science, public service, business and many other fields, that a few individuals sought the means to tap that potential and provide it a channel for productive expression. It was a regrettable reality that most Armenian-Americans would not or could not replace their parents in Armenian political and compatriotic societies. In fact, most Armenian-Americans are involved in no Armenian organization, not even in the Church. Hence, the community has been deprived of the talents and ability of thousands of individuals who may identify personally with their Armenian heritage, but have not found or been offered a satisfactory avenue of

> participation. Unwilling to commit themselves on the basis of their parents' faith alone, they demand businesslike operations, logical and tangible results. (*Armenians in America* 1987, 89)

Some of the projects supported by the Armenian Assembly at present are: the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the government of the United States of America and research and educational programs making the discussion of the Genocide part of the school curriculum[68] and a subject of interest to the academic community. A popular project is the Summer Internship Program that allows college-aged students to work in Washington, DC to learn about the U.S. government and establish professional and fellowship networks. The Armenian Assembly also claims to have a "special responsibility toward the plight of Armenians who are in countries where the integrity of the Armenian community has been threatened and who have fled by the thousands to Europe and elsewhere as refugees" (*Armenians in America* 1987, 91). To this end, it tries to maintain ties with Armenians in the diaspora.

Since the physical and "political" earthquakes in Armenia, the Armenian Assembly has established a bureau in Yerevan, like several other Armenian-American organizations. The Assembly had to respond to the immediate need for relief, and then to redefine its mission. In the words of the chairman of the Board of Trustees:

> Armenia's Declaration of Independence last August marked the beginning of a new chapter in Armenia's history, and gave the people hope for the future. They are now looking to Armenians in the Diaspora to be a source of strength and to provide expertise, technically, economically, and in other ways. In 1990, the Assembly can be proud of its efforts that provided Armenia with new links in the U.S. government leaders, to international humanitarian organizations, and to the media.[69]

More specifically, the Armenian Assembly has hosted the first U.S. trip of President Levon Ter-Petrosyan, was awarded a grant from U.S. AID to support earthquake relief, and presented written testimonies to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on mistreatment of Armenians in Azerbaijan. As an advocacy agency, the Armenian Assembly has found a new and deserving "client" that is in dire need of its services. Its "new" mission, which is still within the mandate of its original goals, is to help connect the West with Armenia and Armenia with the West.

The Armenian Assembly is *not* a political party, but it fulfills many of the functions of political groups. It represents the case of the Armenians in the nation's capital; it selects the collective goals and priorities of Armenian-Americans;[70] and like any political group, it reflects the socioeconomic interests and political aspirations of its leaders and members.[71] Even though the Armenian Assembly claims to hold at heart the interests of Armenians elsewhere in the world, its focus is predominantly American and its perspective mainstream (i.e., not radical). The recognition of the Genocide by the U.S. government (not Turkey!) is a moral issue that extends a visceral tie to all Armenian-Americans. Furthermore, it does not jeopardize the status quo or antagonize the general American public like the issue of "terrorism" and the reclamation of lands from Turkey. The internship program promotes the individual achievements of young Armenian-Americans in their fields of endeavor, and if by the same token it helps heighten feelings of ethnic pride and identity, few would dispute the need for such a program. Their projects, mostly educational and informational, are prudent and highly commendable.

In keeping with general trends in American society and emulating other ethnic groups, Armenian-Americans have created their own "interest group" in the Armenian Assembly of America—a goal-oriented group capable of demanding political, economic, and social benefits for the Armenians whenever or wherever necessary. The Armenian Assembly indirectly challenges the traditional political leadership[72] of the Armenian-American community by offering programs that are of particular relevance to American-born generations, feasible programs that are unlikely to offend many people. As a bureaucracy, it is managed in the best American tradition, with a well-trained, energetic staff, receiving commensurate salaries to their colleagues in the nonethnic world, accountable for their actions, judged on their efficiency; the office is equipped with modern technological innovations, and so on. By transcending the confines of the political culture of the immigrant generation, it offers an acceptable avenue for Armenian-American political action, vicariously.

The Zoryan Institute for Contemporary Armenian Research and Documentation, Inc. was established in Cambridge (MA) in 1982. As its name indicates it is not a political organization. Yet, like the

Armenian Assembly, it is an inadvertent contender for the traditional Armenian leadership in the diaspora, because it challenges the status quo, intellectually. The institute's body of associate scholars, its research interests, its publications, the open university seminars and other conferences it sponsors, all together address the collective consciousness of Armenians in the United States and in the diaspora. In their own words: "The Zoryan Institute takes a unique view of Armenian society.... This means examining the Armenian experience in relation to forces beyond the Armenian world and assessing the impact of historical events on our lives today.... The intent is to establish a new, self-critical standard in the Armenian community ..." (Zoryan Institute brochure 1988).

Among its accomplishments, the Zoryan Institute lists the following: publishing *The Karabagh File*, a compendium of historical documents and analysis of the movement less than one month after the issue gained international attention (see Libaridian 1988); the videotaping of oral histories of Genocide survivors; providing critical evidence for Permanent People's Tribunal session on the Armenian Genocide in 1984; establishing a computerized data bank for documents related to the Genocide; and providing research assistance to scholars, writers, journalists, and filmmakers. Representatives of the Zoryan Institute and the Armenian Assembly have appeared on national television and in the press as spokespersons for Armenian-Americans and Armenians around the world.

The Zoryan Institute exemplifies a new trend in the intellectual leadership of the Armenian-American community. With increasing acculturation and changes in the educational and occupational composition of the ethnic population, highly trained and accomplished academics and researchers who can function successfully in the larger American intellectual arena are favored. The majority (80 percent) of the institute's supporters, that is, dues-paying "friends" and "patrons," are in the words of their brochure, "well-educated professionals," the rest being business owners.[73] The institute is also a product of a new emerging partnership between second-generation Armenian-Americans and highly educated foreign-born Armenians (often U.S. trained) that reflects recent changes within the Armenian-American community, namely, the maturing of the U.S.-born symbolic Armenians and the influx of new immigrants from the Middle East

and the Soviet bloc. Not surprisingly, the institute's supporters can be divided equally between the American-born and the foreign-born.[74]

In exchange for annual dues, supporters of the Zoryan Institute receive scholarly publications and the opportunity to participate in public forums or attend lectures or similar activities if one so desires. Essentially the commitment is financial, and no other involvement is required. Unlike traditional political organizations, both the Armenian Assembly and the Zoryan Institute are not greedy institutions. They do not demand the full energies, body or soul, of their supporters. Financial demands are relatively easy and convenient for symbolic Armenians. In form and function, these organizations correspond to the symbolic type of Armenianness. It is the only way any ethnic organization can succeed in America past the second generation.

In sum, Armenian-Americans are becoming increasingly indifferent to the traditional political parties because they are unable to represent their concerns, let alone alter their material circumstances. The majority of respondents regard the schism as obsolete. Changing traditional ideologies and political structures are, of course, more difficult to achieve than creating new institutions. The concern for church unity illustrates the type of changes that are necessary in the traditional Armenian institutions to correspond (and catch up with, if possible) with the changes that have taken place, for most people, in individual forms of Armenianness. Armenian institutions in the United States are being challenged to change. Their survival depends on their ability to adapt and serve the needs of symbolic Armenians. Emerging organizations like The Armenian Assembly of America are viable alternatives to the traditional political leadership. Their goals and their modes of operation are more congruent with the aspirations and the sympathies of symbolic Armenian-Americans. Though they are *not* political organizations per se, they are the only politicized alternative that can function successfully in the United States.

## Political Participation in American Society

The first Armenians who came to America wanted to make money and then return to their birthplace, where most of their families had stayed. Some hoped that conditions would improve at home in the interim; nonetheless, the intention to return was sustained (Mirak

1983). Kaprielian, speaking of Armenian sojourners in Canada emphasizes: "Length of residence in the new location was largely irrelevant. As long as a man's heart, mind, and money were directed to the family back home, he could remain physically removed from his village for many years" (1986-87, 47). However, the Genocide and forced deportations from Western Armenia and the Sovietization of Eastern Armenia forced many Armenian sojourners to give up their dream of living again in their ancestral homeland.[75]

The post-Genocide diaspora, which included the booming settlements in the New World, was neither the first nor was it going to be the last exile community of the Armenian people. Sojourning had become an Armenian tradition. Armenians readily observe that before the modern era, they had established viable, often prosperous, communities in Lvov (Poland),[76] Calcutta, Madras, Singapore, Isfahan, Baku, Tiflis, Constantinople, Aleppo, Jerusalem, Venice, Vienna, Paris (see Adalian 1989; Dedeyan 1982; Sanjian 1965). Adalian, analyzing the historical evolution of Armenian diasporas, traces the earliest dispersion "to the time when the ancient world was being reshaped into medieval civilizations" (1989, 81). After existing for over a thousand years under the aegis of their chieftains and monarches, anchored in statehood, the geographic location of the Armenian people became subject to constant change. It meant that henceforth a segment of the population would settle beyond the confines of the "homeland."

It is interesting to note that when the Armenians first established a diaspora, they had to coin a new word to describe their situation. Ironically, the word *gaghut* meaning community of exile, came from "the condition of *ghaributiun*, that of being among strangers *(gharib* in Arabic and Turkish meaning stranger)" (Adalian 1989, 88). Armenians also used the the word *spurk* (diaspora) after the 1920s, while Soviet authorities popularized the word *ardasahman* literally meaning "extramural" or "beyond the borders"; implying the "real" patrimony was Soviet Armenia (Mouradian 1990, 306).

At present, Tölölyan writes that an estimated 1,400,000 Armenians in thirty-four nations make up the diaspora.[77] On the other hand, a Soviet Armenian scholar has placed the diaspora Armenian population at 2,225,000 (see the *Armenian Reporter*, 20 February 1986, p 4). Ordjanian (1991, 47), who has combined and compared several

sources, estimates that the Armenian diaspora (outside Soviet Armenia) between 1975 and 1989 stood at 3,084,000. Mouradian (1990, 142,169) puts the total number of Armenians in the world in 1988 between 6 and 6.7 million, of these 3,283,000 lived in Armenia. In any case, these figures suggest that approximately half of the Armenian population of the world lives on historical lands, the other half does not. Moreover, while less than 1 percent of the Armenian population lived in the West (Western Europe, America, Australia) in 1914, that proportion had increased to 20 percent by 1988 (Mouradian 1990, 170).

Sociologists postulate that the sojourner's ideology or the middleman minority form, which characterized early Armenian immigration to the United States, is antithetical to participation in mainstream American politics. However, once the dream is relinquished, the avenue to social and economic integration and hence to assimilation is open. Here, I need to make a distinction between individual and collective ideologies and strategies of social and political adaptation. In America, at the individual level, Armenians found a tolerant society; or more accurately, a background of affective neutrality, which increases the tendency toward rapid assimilation. Armenians were also charmed by America's modernism, its technological development; they were beguiled by its system of values, opportunities, and promise of achievement. Having lost hope of return, many aspired to become successful Americans.

Advancement for the early Armenian immigrants meant education, if not for themselves, then certainly for their children. Mirak (1983, 272) quotes the injunction many an immigrant father and mother repeated time and time again to their children: *Tbrots Kna vor mart ellas* (go to school to be a man). The public schools opened the doors to acculturation. In due course, higher education and corporate employment widened the structural pathways into mainstream America. The involvement of Armenians in American politics follows the same course. Again, I quote from Mirak: "First-generation Armenians were too few in number, too poor, and too inexperienced in American politics to constitute a legitimate ethnic bloc on state or national levels. Moreover, many were preoccupied with Old World issues" (1983, 283). Yet, the Armenian-American press and community spokesmen tried to educate the immigrant generation with American political is-

sues. Gradually, Armenians took on dual identities and commitments, establishing new roots, getting involved in American politics alongside their Armenian loyalties, allegiances, and interests.

At the collective level, the dilemma of being in diaspora was enigmatic intellectually,[78] psychologically, and practically in terms of the day-to-day functioning of Armenian institutions. Once Armenians realized that their condition was permanent for all intents and purposes, the political parties and other organizations had to formulate a new raison d'être to legitimate their claim to the leadership of the diaspora. As described at the beginning of this chapter, the Tashnags, as a revolutionary party, reaffirmed the goal of a free, autonomous Armenia. Others were less articulate, but they continued to function as if they were still middlemen minorities. The dream survived, more or less. Maintenance of Armenianness, as it was practiced under the millet system, and self-preservation, at any cost, became the order of the day. Politics of exclusion, including the phobia of the *odar* (non-Armenian) spouse,[79] old-fashioned survival formulas, resistance to innovation were ultimately self-defeating. The traditional diasporan institutions culminated in the present stagnation and sorry state of affairs that I have described throughout this book. In sum, while on the collective front the Tashnags and anti-Tashnags continue to play out their antiquated battles, the majority of Armenian-Americans, in later generations and younger cohorts, are growing further and further away from most communal behavior. The exceptions are emergent organizations and structures, those made in the United States, that closely correspond to individual forms of voluntary, symbolic Armenianness.

Respondents in the New York sample were asked to specify their political affiliation. Overall, 26.8 percent of the sample said they were Democrats, 36.2 percent said they were Republican and the rest (37 percent) said they were independent (see table 2.12). The overwhelming majority of the sample said they voted in presidential elections in 1984 (83 percent); only 12.6 percent did not vote and another 4.3 percent said they could not vote because they did not have their American citizenship papers. Neither voting behavior nor party affiliation were statistically related to any of the other independent variables. However, slightly more foreign-born than later-generation ethnics did not cast their vote (see table 2.13).

TABLE 2.12
**Frequency Distribution of Political Affiliation by Generation**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 560 | (204) | (267) | (36) | (38) | (15) |
| Democrat | 22.1 | 29.2 | 16.7 | 36.8 | 46.7 |
| Republican | 38.7 | 38.6 | 30.6 | 15.8 | 26.7 |
| Indifferent | 39.2 | 32.2 | 52.8 | 47.4 | 26.7 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

TABLE 2.13
**Frequency Distribution of Voting During Presidential Elections by Generation**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 578 | (215) | (270) | (36) | (41) | (16) |
| Yes | 68.8 | 92.6 | 86.1 | 85.4 | 100.0 |
| No | 19.5 | 7.4 | 13.9 | 14.6 | 0.0 |
| Cannot vote | 11.6 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Only 15.8 percent of the sample said they were politically active in backing local and national issues and candidates (see table 2.14). Of these, 8.1 percent had helped local candidates for office, 4.7 percent had helped national candidates, and 2.4 percent both. Another three respondents (.5 percent) said they had run for office themselves. Most people (14.2 percent) had helped campaigns in minor ways; canvassing, distributing pamphlets, calling prospective voters, and the like (excluding dollar contributions), while 1.6 percent of the sample had provided major help in election campaigns. Political activity was somewhat more significant with education (tau c .12 significant at .0003 level) and religious affiliation (tau c .08 significant at .002 level) than generational status. The higher the educational achievements, the more the political participation; respondents with more than college education helped in elections 23 percent of the time compared to 10 percent for those who had high school diplomas. Also respondents

professing "other" religions (21 percent) and "no religion" (36 percent), who were the most assimilated in the sample, were more likely to be politically involved than those with Armenian denominations (e.g., 14 percent for Apostolics).

TABLE 2.14
**Frequency Distribution of Respondents Politically Active by Generation**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 583 | (218) | (272) | (36) | (41) | (16) |
| No | 90.4 | 80.5 | 86.1 | 80.5 | 68.8 |
| Yes | 9.6 | 19.5 | 13.9 | 19.5 | 31.1 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

New York respondents were asked to agree or disagree with the following statement: "I would vote for an Armenian political candidate at local or national elections regardless of party affiliation." The results were statistically significant by generational status (.17*). Foreign-born respondents were most likely to vote for an Armenian candidate irrespective of political affiliation (71 percent), followed by the second generation (56.6 percent). Nonetheless, even in the third generation, the proportion of respondents who agreed with the statement was considerable (46.8 percent).[80]

Most of the comments on voting behavior were conditional on the qualifications and platform of the candidate. The statement hints of nepotism; it contradicts American traditions of freedom, democracy, and fair play. The following comments were made by young and old alike, but predominantly by American-born respondents: "provided he was a good candidate," or "assuming I agreed with his/her views," or "I vote on qualifications," and again, "only if candidate is qualified and agrees with my principles." A more articulate young second-generation lawyer wrote: "If the candidate were in the mainstream, party affiliation is secondary. If the candidate is extreme, I wouldn't vote for him or her regardless of the particular political party."

There was only one comment that advocated an ethnic stand. This was a middle-aged immigrant woman from the Middle East who said:

"I vote for the person who endorses the Armenian issues." In spite of the above reservations for voting for Armenian candidates, when all other considerations are equal, Armenian-Americans would cast their vote for a fellow Armenian. I was told by one of the community spokespersons I interviewed that a 1984 Armenian-American candidate for Congress received generous campaign funds from fellow ethnics. They could not help with actual votes because not many Armenians live in the district the candidate was representing (Manhattan). Fund-raising banquets or other events for Armenian candidates in local or national elections have received strong support from the Armenian-American community.[81]

Armenians have come of age in the United States. Consequently, more and more Armenian-Americans are acquiring political savvy and some are running for public office.[82] George Deukmejian, former governor of California, as the highest ranking Armenian-American in public office to date, serves as a role model for future generations. Increasingly, Armenian-Americans are also supporting electoral candidates of Armenian descent with financial contributions and votes whenever possible.[83] It is of little significance whether a candidate has previously been involved in Armenian communal activities; most aspirants for public service have not. Yet the community rallies to the support of candidates who claim Armenian descent, and wisely most do so. This symbiotic association between politicians of Armenian descent and Armenian-Americans testifies to their growing maturity in the United States and the flexibility with which they maneuver their symbolic Armenianness.

Armenian-Americans do not only support the candidature of fellow ethnics but are discerning of other politicians who promise to represent their interests in local, state, or national arenas.[84] The comments of the survey respondents indicate the increasing awareness among Armenian-Americans of the need to get involved in the political process. For example, a forty-five-year-old woman who immigrated from Turkey at age twelve wrote:

> In America, we Armenians should run for public office and be effective legislators to be visible locally, nationally, even internationally and so maybe through these types of channels people will recognize us more easily and want to know about our heritage. What I am saying is that credibility will be established and will be visible no matter how the Turks want to eradicate our history from the books.

> America is no longer recognized as a melting pot but ethnicity is quite stylish now, and we should take advantage of it.

The community leaders I interviewed were more explicit in declaring that the token numbers of American politicians of Armenian descent, in spite of their lack of involvement in the formally organized Armenian-American community, have done more to enhance Armenian interests in the United States than all the Armenian political parties put together.[85] For instance one informant said: "With the example of Deukmejian, now others are saying let's also do the same. People like Chip Pashayan [congressman from California] have done more for Armenians than official [Armenian] party members. This is something new for Armenians. They realize they need representation."

What exactly are Armenian interests, one should ask? Besides the acknowledgment of the Genocide, I suggest it is cognizance and respect as a people, and as "good" citizens of the United States. It is also making sure that as many Armenian-Americans as possible attain positions of power and prominence in public and private life. That is, they want to receive what they consider to be their share of the American pie, even if for the majority it is only by proxy.[86]

In sum, Armenian-Americans are dutiful citizens, voting at presidential elections, and participating in the electoral process—a few as candidates and most as supporters and voters. Armenians are also very proud of their record as exemplary citizens of the United States of America.[87] Armenians see themselves as law-abiding, peace-loving, hard-working, self-reliant people. They are quick to note that few of their ranks are on welfare and fewer are criminals. The following quote from a respondent (professional male sixty-two, born in Turkey, immigrated at age twenty-five) is typical of this belief:

> Armenians have displayed an exemplary behavior in any country and society they have gone to live outside their land. They are law-abiding, contributing, loyal and supportive. It seems to me that in their quest to make life for themselves, they feel, too, a human obligation to their host country—for admitting them—to be good citizens. It is their way of paying the host country back. Except for the struggle against the Turks, the crime rate of the Armenians in any country including the U.S. is zero or negligible. We are simply a grateful people by good behavior to any host country outside Armenia.

Observers (e.g., Antreassian 1981, 253; Phillips 1978, 113-14; Mirak 1983, 175; Yeretzian 1923, 70-71) have suggested that

Armenians are generally reluctant to go on welfare because they feel they should not expose their weaknesses and deficiencies to outsiders. This may reflect the traditional value of saving "face" and avoiding shame *(amot)* and other social blemishes. Armenian immigrants are not unique in being good citizens; studies have found that immigrants are less likely than the population at large to be apprehended for violations of the law (Tilly and Brown 1974, 110). This is not to say there are no Armenian criminals (see chap. 1).

Numerous respondents wanted to share with me how they, their parents, or grandparents had been good citizens of the United States of America, giving back to their adopted country what they had received in hospitality and opportunity. For example a middle-aged, second-generation woman wrote: "I believe my parents were happy to come to the U.S.... They are good citizens and are content in the U.S." Another second-generation woman said: "They are good citizens of the United States—my parents. Never taking, always giving. Neither they nor any of the Armenians who came to this country at that time were on welfare, which bothers me now when the newcomers go on welfare first; they do not even try to work. The early Armenian immigrants contributed much toward the development of America."

An eighty-five-year-old woman who immigrated from Turkey at age seventeen wrote: "I am forever grateful to the United States for the safe haven it has provided my family, and truly it has been a land of opportunity. I believe your survey would be more complete if you had provided a section to allow me to tell you of the accomplishments of my children and grandchildren." A sixty-three-year-old, second-generation woman wrote: "Armenians in America appreciate this country and the freedom we have."

A fifty-seven-year-old man, who like his mother was U.S.-born, told me the story of his immigrant father and father-in-law, self-made men who worked hard to become successful in America. He concluded with the following comments:

> I could go on and on, but the point I am trying to bring out is that Armenians as a minority like so many in their times did not throw their hands and demand their new founded government do everything for them; but rather, [they] proved themselves by helping not only themselves but their fellow man. I do hope your paper, while on Armenians, will reflect to other minorities and perhaps 3rd World people that you must take your own initiative and develop it and give it all you

have, and that when coupled with the right help and assistance, the path for better living opens. Then one realizes they did it mostly themselves.

Yet another middle-aged woman who like her mother was U.S.-born explained: "My grandparents (and father) were a total asset to America. My father came to this country as 'steerage' and ended his days (at age 85 yrs old) as a very well-respected member of his community and the State of N.J. He 'gave back' and was one of the proudest 'Americans' you could have hope to know."

Approximately 65 percent of the sample agreed (28 percent disagreed and 7 percent had no opinion) with the following statement: "Armenian 'terrorism' in the last few years has soiled the good name of Armenians in the U.S.A. as a law abiding and peace loving people." Moreover, several respondents (mostly in later generations) wrote to voice their disapproval of "terrorism." A fifty-five-year-old, third-generation woman wrote: "Damn right. It makes us look like a bunch of hoods." Similarly, a twenty-five-year-old, third-generation man said: "I think the use of terrorism to further nationalistic causes is abhorrent and antithetical to American and Western values. Political pressure should be resorted to." Yet another middle-aged, third-generation woman wrote: "I feel embarrassed when the Armenians and Turks kill each other today.... Most Armenians involved have such hatred, and I do not want to be part of hating any fellow man."

On the other hand, foreign-born respondents were more sympathetic to Armenian "terrorism," some correcting the language of the questionnaire, crossing out the word terrorism and replacing it with patriotism and freedom fighters. A sixty-five-year-old man, who was born in Iran and settled in the United States in his youth, wrote: "I sympathize with Armenian terrorists. We should help them more. They are keeping the Armenian Question open. Too bad if [the] American Government does not agree." Another foreign-born young woman who immigrated recently from the Middle East said: "I do support the Armenian terrorism, because they have helped Americans know Armenians. I hate Turks and wish them dead, all of them."

Most Armenian-Americans condone the U.S. government's policies and decisions, even when such policies are antagonistic to Armenian interests. U.S. aid (i.e., tax dollars) to the government of Turkey is the best example. About 68 percent of the sample disagreed (16.5 percent

agreed and another 15.5 percent had no opinion) with the statement: "I would support Armenian 'terrorism' against Turkish military bases." Armenian-Americans continue to support their government even when their personal judgment is contrary to established policies. That is why only 33 percent of the sample disagreed with the statement (35 percent agreed and the rest had no opinion): "I believe that the interests of the U.S.A. are indeed furthered against the Communist Bloc by supporting Turkey." A twenty-eight-year-old, third-generation man wrote: "I am disgusted by America's idiotic support (and paranoid support) of Turkey, because of their obvious border with the 'dreaded enemy,' but so is America's stupidity throughout the world." Indeed, being openly critical of the U.S. government's policies is the best of American democratic traditions. The results clearly attest to the civic and political assimilation of Armenian-Americans in the use of the political machinery, voting behavior, running for public office, and supporting Armenian and non-Armenian candidates by financial contributions or otherwise.

### *Public Involvement for Armenian Issues*

So far, this study has shown that Americans of Armenian descent are fairly well integrated as individuals into the American political process. However, as an interest group, they are unlikely to be mobilized to their optimum potential for a number of reasons. First, Armenian-Americans are too few in number and geographically scattered. With the exception of Los Angeles, they do not represent a significant voting bloc in the United States, thus are unable to sway public opinion through the ballot box alone. Second, Armenian-Americans are poorly organized and so far have not been able to articulate their objectives cohesively.[88] The schism has blinded them to such an extent that it has prevented collaboration for the common good. Third, the effect of assimilation is undeniable. Significant human and material resources are lost because the traditional institutions have not been able to engage the attention and interest of those in later generations.

One of the few objectives that most Armenian-Americans can agree upon is the official acknowledgment of the Genocide, "the *sine qua non* of the Armenian experience in the twentieth century" (Ayanian

and Ayanian 1987, 25). Ideally, such ethnic goals should be translated into concrete action through political channels. Respondents were therefore asked whether they had used democratic processes to influence decision making in favor of the Armenians in their local governments and through their congressmen and senators in the nation's capital. There is evidence that such political processes are effective. For example, an analysis of statements related to Armenian issues from *The Congressional Record* between 1965 and 1983 suggests that both houses of Congress were clearly in favor of acknowledging the Armenian Genocide in spite of the pro-Turkish policies[89] of the administration (Yegparian 1987). There were no differences between Democrats and Republicans when representation and size were controlled. Most notably, it was found that more political statements were made in favor of the Armenians "when the money, votes, and political activity started flowing from the Armenian community" (Yegparian 1987, 62). Such statements help legitimize Armenian claims by sheer repetition and publication in official government records. The gain may seem small, but it fulfills the Armenian goal of respect and recognition.

First, survey respondents were asked whether they had ever written letters to their congressmen or visited Washington to help pass a bill that would make April 24 "A Day of Remembrance of Man's Inhumanity to Man."[90] Overall, 41.4 percent of the sample had written to Congress; by all counts a remarkably high level of participation! First and second-generation respondents were slightly more likely to have done so than later-generation respondents (see table 2.15) but the relationship was not very significant statistically (tau c .09 significant at .01 level). On the other hand, writing to Congress was strongly associated with religious affiliation (.25*) and with sympathy to Armenian political parties (.22*). As expected, respondents with non-Armenian or no religious affiliations were least likely to have written to Congress (see table 2.16). Likewise, respondents who were indifferent or rejected Armenian political ideologies were least likely to write to their congressmen to further the passage of a bill that would have the Armenian Genocide recognized officially by the U.S. government (see table 2.17).

Second, respondents were asked to indicate how many of the three types of public action listed, if any, they had been involved in: getting

jobs for other Armenians, helping establish an Armenian school, and furthering Armenian interests in their community. Public action was not defined in the questionnaire, but it is suspected that many misunderstood the question to mean individual action. Overall, 27.4 percent of the sample said they helped get jobs for other Armenians, almost 20 percent said they helped start an Armenian school, and the highest affirmative response (33 percent) was for the vaguest statement, namely to further Armenian interests, which could have meant almost anything. This finding adds weight to a loose definition of symbolic Armenianness and convenience in ethnic participation. The fewer the constraints, the more the variations, the wider the following.

With each passing generation there is a monotonic decline in the percentage of respondents who report having been involved in public action to help fellow Armenians (see table 2.18); from 66 percent of

**TABLE 2.15**
**Frequency Distribution of Writing to Congress on the Genocide Issue by Generation**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 582 | (218) | (271) | (36) | (41) | (16) |
| No | 55.5 | 56.5 | 63.9 | 78.0 | 75.0 |
| Yes | 44.5 | 43.5 | 36.1 | 22.0 | 25.0 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

**TABLE 2.16**
**Frequency Distribution of Writing to Congress on the Genocide Issue by Religious Affiliation**

| | Apostolic Armenian | Protestant Armenian | Catholic Armenian | Other (Non-Arm.) | No Religion |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 574 | (368) | (56) | (22) | (92) | (36) |
| No | 49.5 | 64.3 | 81.8 | 73.9 | 88.9 |
| Yes | 50.5 | 35.7 | 18.2 | 26.1 | 11.1 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

the first generation to 46 percent of the second generation, to 39 percent of those who have one U.S.-born parent, 27 percent of those with two U.S.-born parents and 12 percent of those with U.S.-born grandparents. The first generation were also most likely to advocate Armenian day school education and help start such institutions.

Contributing tax-deductible dollars to Armenian political parties or para-political organizations is the most popular form of involvement. The New York survey has also demonstrated that for emotionally charged issues, such as the Genocide, individuals are willing to write to their political representatives, or to editors of local and national newspapers. More active forms of political participation trail behind

**TABLE 2.17**
**Frequency Distribution of Writing to Congress on the Genocide Issue by Sympathy to Ethnic Politics**

| | Ramgavar | Tashnag | Neutral | Indifferent | Rejects Parties |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 527 | (28) | (109) | (143) | (177) | (70) |
| No | 42.9 | 43.1 | 53.1 | 68.9 | 70.0 |
| Yes | 57.1 | 56.9 | 46.9 | 31.1 | 30.0 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

**TABLE 2.18**
**Frequency Distribution of Engaging in Public Action in Support of Fellow Armenians by Generation (multiple response)**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents + U.S.-Born | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 299 (cases) | (146) | (126) | (14) | (13) | |
| Find jobs for Armenians (159 responses) | 53.5 | 38.4 | 4.4 | 3.8 | 100.0 |
| Help start school (114 responses) | 60.5 | 35.1 | 2.6 | 1.8 | 100.0 |
| Armenian interests (192 responses) | 45.8 | 43.8 | 5.2 | 5.2 | 100.0 |

by a significant distance. Public demonstrations, rallies, and the like do not attract large crowds. For example, during the last few years, in solidarity with their compatriots in the homeland and in response to their demands for political support, Armenian-Americans in New York, predominantly from the first and second generation, staged vigils in front of the Soviet Mission to the UN, marched to the United Nations headquarters, held rallies in Times Square, sent telegrams to Moscow and Washington, and held press conferences. The number of individuals who participate in such public gatherings is very small, often a few hundred, on rare occasions it may reach five thousand or so. Likewise in Los Angeles, and other cities with sizable Armenian populations, the number of participants in such public events have consistently been negligible in proportion to the universe of people of Armenian descent in the United States.

Here, I need to point out that even though the ethnic press keeps abreast of the latest developments in the Armenian world, it is often the only source of such information. The large numbers of Armenian-Americans who are not exposed to the Armenian media tend to remain

**TABLE 2.19**
**Frequency Responses to Attitude Statement on "Free Armenia"**

| Statement | One | Two | Three | Four | Five |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total N = | (560) | (573) | (559) | (569) | (567) |
| Strongly agree | 6.6 | 13.6 | 15.4 | 17.6 | 26.3 |
| Mildly agree | 7.1 | 12.0 | 14.1 | 17.6 | 25.0 |
| No opinion | 31.6 | 20.1 | 23.8 | 26.0 | 17.3 |
| Mildly disagree | 12.1 | 8.0 | 8.9 | 16.0 | 13.8 |
| Strongly disagree | 42.5 | 46.1 | 37.7 | 22.8 | 17.6 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Statements:
1 "Armenians in the Diaspora should eventually settle in Soviet Armenia to avoid assimilation."
2 "I would be willing to live in a free Armenia."
3 "If necessary, I would fight to free Armenia."
4 "I believe that one day in the distant future we will be able to have a free Armenia."
5 "I consider Soviet Armenia as the spiritual homeland of Armenians."

ignorant of the issues and ideological interpretations, and thus are unlikely to become engaged in political action, symbolic or otherwise. People of Armenian descent alienated from the Armenian community are more likely to accept the social construction of reality put forward by the national press and news media.

A case in point is the language bias of prestigious national newspapers. Armenian-American scholars have noted that the Armenian/Azeri conflict was described as "ethnic unrest" while similar conflicts in the Baltic Republics was called 'nationalistic.'[91] Similarly, in a content analysis of five major national dailies *(New York Times, Washington Post, Boston Globe, Los Angeles Times, Christian Science Monitor)* from February to August 1988, Chorbajian (1989) found that the reporting of the Karabagh issue was grossly misinterpreted. Instead of reporting a grass-roots movement for democratization, human rights, and self-determination, the U.S. dailies took their cue from the State Department and denied fair and accurate coverage of the movement. Chorbajian suggests that the wrong timing of the Karabagh movement from the American perspective made it a kind of nuisance in their eyes. It risked disturbing the thaw in U.S.-Soviet relations, and embarrassing NATO's ally, Turkey, by revealing the historical roots of the conflict.

In sum, there is a straight-line generational decline in involvement in Armenian issues and interests. Because the Genocide is a topic dear to the hearts of many Armenian-Americans, more people wrote to Congress than participated in action to help fellow Armenians. A general pattern seems to emerge. It characterizes all aspects of public involvement. The integration of first- and second-generation Armenian-Americans in the larger "American" society parallels their participation in the Armenian world. However, starting with the third generation, most people of Armenian descent limit their collective manifestations of their Armenianness to a minimum. As shown in the section above, Armenian-Americans, irrespective of generational status (except for the very recent immigrants), have become skilled in the use of the political machinery. Here, one finds that with the third generation their participation in Armenian issues is curtailed, especially the more demanding forms of involvement.

Diasporan relations have changed with the ebb and flow of East-West relations since the 1920s (see Phillips 1978, 196). Periodically,

Armenian-Americans have had to reevaluate their status and their rapport with the "motherland." Five attitude statements were included in the questionnaire on the issue of "free Armenia" (see table 2.19). It is remarkable that between one-fifth and one-third of the sample had no opinion on the matter. About one-half regarded Soviet Armenia as a spiritual homeland of Armenians. It is the highest affirmative position Armenian-Americans were prepared to take. It should be noted that these statements are not value-free. Those who espouse a pro-Tashnag ideology believe strongly in "freeing" Armenia, one day. The anti-Tashnag ideology, on the other hand, advocates the protection of a superpower for the survival of an Armenian nation (see also Phillips 1978, 268).

These complex statements on "free Armenia" were included in the survey to measure support for traditional ideologies. Very few respondents would ever consider living anywhere except in the United States of America. They vehemently indicated:

> I'll stay in U.S. of America—Thank you (female 68, second generation).
>
> I thank the Turks for being so nasty and evil because if not I might have been born there too.
>
> Thank God for America.
>
> America is the *only* country I will fight for (female 55, third generation).
>
> I would never leave America. I am *American*. Was born *here* (male 53, third generation, mother Italian; emphasis in original).

The views of the "silent majority" of American-born Armenians are best summarized in a speech delivered on the occasion of the visit of Catholicos Vasken I to New York City in October 1987. The committee chairperson, a man who came to the United States with his parents at a very young age, is representative of second-generation ethnics. He said:

> I am an American.... I am not a product of a separate Armenian community that happened to be located in this land. I am part and parcel of the mainstream of America. I am not a stranger or a guest or here by anyone's sufferance. If Diaspora means a return someday to another land, then I am not of it. This is home. I am American.[92]

The survey respondents are citizens of the United States of America and happy to be so. Armenia, Soviet or free, lies in the realm of the spirit. It is an emotional link.

Yet, Americans of Armenian descent do not live in a vacuum. Diasporan Armenians and international events have the power to influence their self-image and status. It has been suggested that "group trauma" may happen at any time (Bender and Kagiwada 1968, 370). An ethnic group may periodically gain or lose status because of the differential impact of international events. Group trauma may heighten self-appraisal of the ethnic group by its members and by the society at large. For example, anti-Semitism and the media's exposure of the Holocaust is more likely to keep Jewish ethnicity in "continual revival," while the absence of these factors may induce Italian ethnicity to become latent (see McKay 1982, 411).

The earthquake is an excellent illustration of "group trauma." When the massive earthquake hit Soviet Armenia on December 7, 1988, killing over 25,000 people, injuring 19,000, destroying fifty-eight cities, towns,[93] and villages and leaving over 500,000 men, women, and children destitute, world attention focused on the Armenians for days and weeks. The news media reported on Secretary Gorbachev as he interrupted his visit to New York City and flew back to the disaster scene. It gave updates on rescue efforts and the international teams that converged on Leninakan and Spitak. It broadcast news on volunteers, donations, and fund-raising efforts by charitable and humanitarian organizations. In the United States, the spotlight was also on Armenian-Americans.

Armenian-Americans were deeply saddened and grieved by the death and devastation in their spiritual homeland. They saw the earthquake as the last episode in a chain of calamities befalling their people. It was interpreted as a direct threat to their survival as a people, as a nation. They felt frustrated and betrayed by their historical destiny. Vartan Gregorian, president of Brown University and prominent Armenian historian, is reported in *New York Times* to have said: "Armenians feel like Job's people.... God has tested us for more than 2,000 years."[94] Yet, there was solace in the world's recognition of their tragedy and the rescue efforts that ensued. There was also hope in their belief in their creativity and ingenuity as a people to start

anew once again. They would rebuild new lives, new cities, new communities.

The Armenian community in the United States officially went into forty days of mourning, and requiem services were held in Armenian churches. Upcoming Christmas and New Year celebrations sponsored by Armenian voluntary associations were all cancelled; some people even refrained from decorating Christmas trees and exchanging gifts in the privacy of their homes. Armenian-Americans volunteered their time, effort, expertise, and contacts at centers where aid was being collected.

Many men and women of Armenian descent who had not been active in communal structures brought in their contributions, even by a token check. Nonetheless, their reaction to the earthquake was first and foremost a humanitarian concern. It touched them as it had touched many, many others around the world, regardless of their race, nationality, religion, or social status. Even people who had never heard of Armenians in their lives were moved to participate in the relief effort. With a massive problem at hand, and a concrete objective to fulfill, it was easy to solicit help and obtain it.

The earthquake heightened the general American public's awareness of the Armenians. Unlike the group traumas caused by "terrorism," this time, Armenian-Americans were not ashamed to be identified with their ancestral roots. The world's reaction was compassionate, supportive. Watching television, people were able to empathize with a father holding his dead son in his arms or a little girl bewildered by the enormity of the chaos around her.

At times of crises such as these, when the images of the devastation in human lives are still fresh in people's memory, and the goals of fund-raising are clear to all, symbolic Armenians, even ex-ethnics, are pressed to set aside their alienation from their ancestral roots. However, this involvement should not be construed as a "return" to communal life or behavioral Armenianness. Feelings of sorrow and monetary contributions, even volunteering one's time at Armenian centers, does not signify a desire to return to traditional forms of Armenianness or a need to participate in events and activities sponsored by Armenian churches and organizations.

The "political" earthquake in Armenia has terminated the ideological impasse of Armenian institutions in the diaspora. A free,

autonomous homeland is in the making. Now, the political parties and other traditional institutions can officially relinquish the dream of repatriation. Instead, they need to formulate fresh ideologies that reflect the realities and needs of Armenian-Americans; they need to account for the fact that the overwhelming majority are here to stay and their Armenianness is voluntary, symbolic. The new Armenia is the legitimate "center." Of course, support is not unanimous; not everybody will agree with the policies of the government in Yerevan. Already, many Armenian-Americans are apprehensive about the Republic's decision to open trade and other cooperative relations with the government of Turkey, the archenemy of the Armenians. Many question that decision and reflect on the historical record of this treacherous neighbor. Nonetheless, some reason that the physical survival of the people of Armenia and their welfare has to take precedence over emotional hobbyhorses of diasporan Armenians.[95]

As the "center" of Armenian existence, the Republic's population can shoulder the major responsibility for creating culture and perpetrating history. This does not mean that there is no role for Armenian-Americans. On the contrary, the relationship between Armenian-Americans and the Republic of Armenia can become functional. Analogous to Israel's ties to diasporan Jews, center and periphery can draw from each other's strength and achieve a mutually supportive co-existence. For the time being, Armenia is rebuilding itself: physically, economically, socially, intellectually, culturally, and any which way there is. Its need for assistance is urgent and monumental. Already, many Armenian-American organizations have initiated a variety of projects to share in that rebuilding. For many of these organizations, the decision to invest in the future of Armenia was not hard to reach. In their by-laws and constitutions, they had provisions for serving other Armenians in need. Is there a more compelling reason than coming to the rescue of a homeland, believed to be almost lost? Many Armenian-American organizations leaped to their new mission, like a child rushes to a mother who has suffered a traumatic accident and needs to be taken care of.

Paradoxically, setting up concrete, clearly defined goals and specific, tangible projects, such as building a cold-storage unit or a plant to construct prefabricated housing, training neurosurgeons or correspondents for Cable News Network with the latest technological

innovations, are more likely to excite and engage symbolic Armenian-Americans in later generations. Indeed, Armenian identity in the United States may be easier to sustain when the goals for Armenian-American institutions become instrumental, than when self-preservation was an end in itself. But why would later-generation men and women of Armenian descent want to get involved in Armenian projects, albeit, in a limited, professional capacity? By lending their expertise and knowhow to someone in need, they may derive ego gratification, enhance their self-worth, and feel empowered by their group affiliation. These are exactly the same functions that symbolic Armenianness fulfills. Isn't the grass next door greener? Traveling to Yerevan, on occasion, adds significantly to the list of perks.

In this chapter, I have shown that two of the traditional Armenian institutions, the church and political parties, are suffering from their inability to adapt to the needs of their "clients." Most significantly, they have not been able to find the language to communicate with Armenian-Americans in later generations and younger cohorts. The Armenian Apostolic church has the advantage of offering a unique, "exotic" Christian tradition for those who seek diversification from the homogenizing tendencies of American society. Furthermore, it is easier to be a "church community" in America than an "ethnic community." The double boundaries of ethnicity and religion reinforce one another for the Apostolics, adding a buffer against forces of assimilation. Yet, Armenianness in later generations is not an ascribed status. The church cannot expect men and women who by an accident of birth have Armenian roots to automatically becoming parishioners and absorb its tenets by osmosis. The church needs to change in order to accommodate the symbolic Armenians; it needs to introduce more English and shorten the services, emphasize the devotional aspect of religion, and socialize future generations to appreciate its uniqueness. Like any other commodity in a competitive market, the church needs to become attractive to its potential "customers."

Armenian political parties are becoming more and more insignificant in the lives of later-generation descendants. The post-World War II immigration wave is the only reason why they are still in existence today. Young recruits are hard to come by. As Simmel predicted, the jurisdictional dispute is alienating more and more

Armenian-Americans and forcing them to drop out of most communal forms of participation. A handful of organizations, that have sprung up in the last few decades, are challenging the political hegemony of the traditional parties. These are attractive to symbolic Armenians because they demand only token participation and embody their goals and interests as Americans first and Armenians second.

The New York data shows that Armenian-Americans, irrespective of generation (except for newest arrivals), have become sophisticated in their knowledge and use of the American political system. About a third are Republicans, another third Democrats. The majority cast their votes in presidential elections. Some have been active in local and national politics and most realize the importance of political participation. They support their government even if they personally do not agree with its policies. Above all, Armenian-Americans see themselves as good citizens of the United States of America. Many feel that their image was tarnished by the Armenian "terrorism" of the 1970s, but they take heart that when the earthquake struck Armenia, the world came to its rescue.

Armenian-Americans have not been mobilized effectively to defend their interests, at home and in the diaspora. The recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the U.S. government is one of the few ideological motives that incites the participation of Armenian-Americans; about two-fifths of the respondents in the survey had written letters to Congress on the matter. Armenian-Americans do not sustain traditional ideologies on the eventual return to a free, autonomous homeland; though about half of the sample maintained that [Soviet] Armenia was a spiritual homeland. Adamantly, many wrote to say they were Americans and they were here to stay. Group trauma such as the physical and political earthquakes in Armenia have focused world attention on the Armenians in recent years, keeping their ethnicity in continual revival. But this does not change the fact that Armenianness in the United States is voluntary, symbolic. Armenian-Americans will not go back to the life-style of their grandparents. They will not start attending Divine Liturgy every Sunday nor become Hunchags, Ramgavars, or Tashnags.

## Notes

1. *Ideology* is defined "as a pattern of ideas which simultaneously provides for its adherents: (1) a self-definition, (2) a description of the current situation, its background, and what is likely to follow, and (3) various imperatives which are 'deduced' from the foregoing. In ideology there is a strong tendency to merge fact and value, to superimpose upon 'things as they are' the things that are desired" (Matossian 1958, 218).
2. The Armenian Protestant and Catholic churches are not officially involved with the schism, though some of their adherents are members or sympathizers of Armenian political parties.
3. Ordjanian, using a political economy perspective, calls the Armenians "one of the world's 'non-state nations'; peoples who consider themselves temporarily disinherited, while worthy of attaining nation-statehood" (1991, 41).
4. Such ideas were brought forward at several Open University Seminars sponsored by the Zoryan Institute for Contemporary Armenian Research and Documentation, Inc. that I attended in the 1980s. For example, in a seminar on "Legitimacy and Democracy in Armenian Life" by Jivan Tabibian (3 December 1988, at Columbia University, New York City) the ideology of an eventual return was criticized as a myth that is hindering Armenian-Americans from becoming integrated as a more powerful 'interest' group in American mainstream politics, hence the world.
5. The Armenian Apostolic church is also known as the Armenian National church, Armenian Orthodox church, or the Gregorian church (after the evangelist Gregory the Illuminator). The church is called Apostolic after the apostles Thaddeus and Bartholomew, believed to have first preached the message of Jesus Christ to the Armenians.
6. Armenians believe that their national conversion came in the year 301 A.D. Some scholars have; however, postulated that 314 A.D. is more accurate since it comes after the Edict of Milan in 313 when Christians in the Roman Empire became officially tolerated.
7. Note that the Armenian Apostolic church shares theological agreement with the Coptic Church of Egypt, the Abyssinian Church of Ethiopia, the Syrian Church, and Malabar Church of India. The split came about when the Armenians failed to attend the Council of Chalcedon in A. D. 451 because of theological (over the monophysite formula) and political disagreements (asserting their independence from Byzantines and Nestorians in Iran). Armenians believe that in 451 their ancestors were fighting for the very existence of their faith. The legendary nobleman Vartan Mamigonian, at the head of a small army, was at Avarayr battling the formidable forces of the pagan Persians (Zoroastrians). Though defeated, the Armenians were allowed to practice Christianity (it seems the Persians conceded because they were facing political problems elsewhere). The moral victory at Avarayr has since become for the Armenians a symbol of self-determination, of surmounting all odds, and a reminder of the fusion of the church's interests with those of the state. Now, *Vartanank* is one of the "holy" days in the Armenian calendar. See Ordjanian (1991, 228-32) on how it is celebrated in an Armenian elementary school in contemporary U.S.A.
8. According to Cahnman, the origin of the millet system is an "Eastern" practice dating back to the Sassanid rulers of Persia who were then Zoroastrians. They

had found it advantageous to tolerate Christians and Jews. Islam carried the system further. Non-Muslim subjects were organized into homogeneous communities, and political power was delegated to their own ecclesiastical leaders. The millet lacked territorial cohesion and military power, but was an autonomous unit within the state. The laws of personal statute were based upon religious sanctions. In a similar vein to Emile Durkheim's description of the *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: Free Press, 1954) Eastern Christianity, traditional Judaism, and Islam "do not dissociate religion from social life, from community ties, from civic status, and from law" (Cahnman 1944, 256). Society is thus conceived as an enlarged family and perpetuated through religious worship. By contrast, modern nationalism is based on territorial boundaries and political contract. For example, the Armenian delegation at the Congress of Berlin in 1878 was a representative of the Catholicos of Armenians. Millets were initially quasi-religious, endogamous, living in close proximity, but became a "people" late in their history. It is the "time aspect of society rather than the space aspect" that is significant in the consciousness of such 'people' (Cahnman 1944, 256). Similar to the Armenians, the Greeks, who were organized under the same principle, continue today to regard the church and nationalism as inseparable (Scourby 1980, 70). It should be noted that remnants of the millet system persist in many Middle Eastern nations today, notably in Lebanon where the sociopolitical structure of the nation is based on proportional representation of religious communities in government and politics. At the beginning of the Civil War, the Armenian community in Lebanon was one of the seven most important religious groupings in Lebanese politics (see Bedoyan 1979).

9. Libaridian, in tracing the development of Armenian political thought until the 1850s, observes that Mehmet II intentionally created the office of Patriarch in the fifteenth century to regulate the affairs of the millet and assist in collecting taxes. The Patriarch came even to dominate the catholicoci of Sis and Akhtamar who were above him in the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Moreover, the Patriarch was not elected nor accountable to the Armenians in the empire; ultimately his power within the millet was circumscribed by that of the Sublime Porte. Libaridian concludes: "Behind the facade of religious autonomy and cultural self-management, the millet system excluded the masses from any real participation in Ottoman political life while sustaining the impression of Armenian access to power" (1987, 94).
10. It should be noted that there were Armenian Catholics in Asia Minor well before the nineteenth century. One of the most famous converts was Abbot Mekhitar, a scholar and clergyman, who embraced Catholicism in 1695. In 1701, he founded the Mekhitarist Order whose primary aims included the promotion of literacy and education among the Armenian people through the training of teachers and translation and printing of classical western thought. On the other hand, the Armenian Evangelical Church was established on 1 July 1846 when thirty-seven men and three women met in Constantinople (Tootikian 1981, 11).
11. The Armenian Apostolic Diocese marks its 100th anniversary in 1991 with celebrations in Worchester (see *Armenian Reporter*, 20 June 1991, p 10). After being the hub of Armenian life in America, at present the city struggles to maintain a viable Armenian-American community. Estimates suggest that it lost more than half of its population since its heyday just before the Great Depression. About 4,500 Armenian-Americans are said to live in Greater Worcester today

(see Kevork Imirzian, "Trading Places: As the First Bastion of Armenian Immigration, Worcester Struggles to Keep the Memory Alive," *Armenian International Magazine*, May 1991, pp. 22-24).

12. See also "Brief History of the Armenian Evangelical Church of NY as 90th Anniversary Approaches," *Armenian Reporter*, 24 October 1985, p. 17. See Megerdichian (1983) for a brief history of Armenian churches in America and lists of parishes in North America.
13. Megerdichian (1983) estimates 25,000 Protestant Armenians live in the United States. I suspect this has increased in the last couple of decades. Tootikian (1981) numbers 24 Evangelical churches [19 of these being members of the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America (see list pp. 289-90)]. Los Angeles seems to witness the multiplication and revival of its Protestant congregations. Old church edifices are being renovated for more spacious surroundings or sold for more desirable locations. For example, the Armenian Cilicia Congregational Church in Pasadena first founded around 1922-27 has recently held dedication ceremonies for its refurbished new sanctuary (see *Armenian Reporter*, 20 June 1991, p. 14).
14. Megerdichian's (1983) list of Armenian parishes in the United States totals 123: 49 in Eastern Diocese, 17 in Western Diocese (total 66); 22 in Eastern Prelacy, 7 in Western Prelacy (total 29); 22 Protestant and 6 Catholic churches. Megerdichian includes in his list congregations that do not necessarily hold regular services every Sunday.
15. Saint Nerses Armenian Seminary, established in 1967 in conjunction with St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary in Crestwood (NY), offers a Master's degree in Divinity. Students (mostly men) take courses in Armenian language, history, liturgy, music, church doctrines, canon law, etc. The seminary is governed by a board of directors and is under the jurisdiction of the Eastern and Western Diocese. In May 1990, a young American-born woman became the ninth graduate of the school in the previous five years (see *News from St Nerses*, A publication of St. Nerses Armenian Seminary, Fall 1990, p.1). Still the church seems to suffer severe shortages. According to one account, in 1990, of a total of forty active parishes in the Eastern and Western Diocese, seven had no full-time priests (almost 20 percent). This figure ignores the twelve "missions" where young congregations will be needing priests in the years to come. Moreover, it is estimated that in the next ten years, 40 percent of the clergymen will be retiring (Michael Findikyan, "Priests Do Not Fall From Heaven," *Window* 4, n. 4 [Fall 1990]: 20-22). For a critical view of this (e.g., special issue: "Is the Collar Choking the Armenian Priest?" Fall 1990) and other matters related to the Apostolic church see *Window: View of the Armenian Church*, a quarterly published by The Armenian Church Research and Analysis Group, Reseda, California.
16. *Hai Heghapokhakan Tashnagtsutiune* or Tashnag for short, it is spelled Dashnak in Eastern Armenian dialect.
17. Ter Minassian (1984, 19) explains that the word *fedayee* comes from Persian and means "he who is committed" or "he who is sacrificed."
18. *Ramgavar Azadagan Gusagtsutiun*, or Ramkavar in Eastern Armenian dialect. This was a merger of three earlier groups including the original party, *Sahmanadir Ramgavar* party, which was founded in 1908 in Cairo (Walker 1980, 354).
19. The Hunchag party was established in 1887, *Hunchag* (meaning "bell") was the

name of the party organ. See also Aram Arkun. "Hunchakians." *Armenian International Magazine,* March 1991, pp. 25-28.

20. Opposition to Tashnag militant ideology does not prevent the *chezok* (nonpartisans) from attending cultural and educational programs of general interest to the Armenian people sponsored by organizations affiliated with the Tashnag party.
21. Atamian (1955) has produced an interesting sociological analysis of the Tashnag/anti-Tashnag ideologies and worldviews. However, his account is heavily biased toward the Tashnag position. It should be noted that the book was written during the Cold War period when superpowers had strongly penetrated Armenian thought and action, aggravating the internal schism and propelling it toward bloodshed (in Lebanon).
22. The term "starving Armenians" was used in the United States between the 1890s and 1920s when the plight of the Armenian people was a *cause célèbre.* Numerous fund-raising campaigns publicized the massacres and deportations and asked donations to help orphaned Armenians. By the beginning of World War I, there were more American missionaries in Turkey than anywhere else in the world, serving mainly the Armenians. The term "starving Armenians" became a household term as children were scolded into cleaning up their plates, and Protestant relief associations collected pennies from Sunday schools (see Dobkin 1977, 8; Papazian 1986, 48).
23. Organizations that were in existence prior to the schism took "sides" unofficially because of the political affiliations of their membership, such as the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU). AGBU is a well-endowed charitable organization established by Boghos Nubar Pasha in Cairo, Egypt, in 1906. Though nominally the AGBU is not aligned politically, its members have been predominantly Ramgavar party members, partisans, or *chezok* (nonpartisans).
24. In her study of the Armenian community in Washington, DC, O'Grady corroborates that the pro- and anti-Tashnag churches were only five miles away from each other, "yet many active community members had never been in the opposing church either for church services or community activities" (O'Grady 1979, 33).
25. The post-Genocide Armenian community of Turkey (mainly Istanbul) is an interesting exception and remains to this day apolitical due to social pressures, intimidation, and suppression by the Turkish authorities (see Libaridian 1979, 43-46).
26. Claire Mouradian corroborates that Armenia SSR was "*nationale par la forme, socialiste par le contenu*" (1990, 307, italics in original). The Soviets tried to dictate diasporan life any which way they could, including the infiltration of the church by their agents (p. 318). The goal was to legitimate Soviet Armenia as the only national homeland in the eyes of the diasporan population. For example, the word *ardashman* (literally "extramural, beyond the borders") was the favorite Soviet term for diaspora, because Soviet Armenia was the "real" patrimony of the Armenians (p. 396). For example, Mouradian explains that Archbishop Tourian wanted to celebrate November 29, the date of the Sovietization of Armenia in the church, while he had refused to commemorate April 24 (the date for the commemoration of the Genocide). He was instrumental in enticing the "progressive" elements of the community to oppose the display of the tricolor flag in public events (see below), a conflict which eventually led to his murder (p.

318).

27. The Armenians are by no means unique in being internally divided. For example, Padgett (1980) writes that the Serbian Orthodox Diocese was split into two violently opposed groups in 1963, not because of religious differences, but because of accusations that the mother church in Yugoslavia had come under the influence of the Communist government. The opposing faction argued that it could fight communism more effectively if it supported the church in Belgrade. The Armenian experience is closely applicable to that of the Serbs. Padgett observes: "Despite virtually identical religions, cultural, and social practices, the two parishes have remained committed to their 'cause' with equal fervor" (1980, 60).

28. Mouradian makes a convincing argument that the Soviets had their own agenda in making these concessions. However, she writes, after the death of Stalin: "Les techniques de séduction de la diaspora se sont progressivement affinées" (1990, 335); from crass manipulation of patriotic themes, they adopted new campaigns aimed to "charm" and "seduce" the diaspora. After 1964, the Armenian Communist party created the Committee for Cultural Relations with the Diaspora, *(Spiurkahay-Komité)*, equipped with with a staff of seventy, it aimed to promote the Armenian language and culture — *hayabahbanoum* ("conserve Armenianness"). For example, after the 1960s, about fifty teachers were trained each year in Armenia SSR; schoolbooks and other publications were diffused, often free of charge (300,000 between 1962-1980); several magazines and journals were distributed; Armenpress, a permanent information agency, started to transmit news directly from Yerevan (via Moscow) to Beirut in 1967, to New York in 1970, to Paris in 1972; the Mesrop Machtoz prize in education, the Komitas prize in music and the Sarian prize in fine arts were established for diasporan Armenians who deserved recognition; tourism flourished and artists and intelligentsia exchanged visits between the "berceau de la nation" (cradle of the nation) and diaspora. The Soviets also erected a memorial for the victims of the Genocide (though April 24 was not officially recognized as a holiday until 1988!). Mouradian goes on to observe: "La diffusion de la culture et de la langue arméniennes n'est pourtant pas tout à fait neutre" (1990, 337). The communist ideology remained omnipresent (for example in the text or photos of their publications), but more seriously, the word "liberty" was totally absent in all Soviet Armenian communications; instead they talked about "peace" and "security." The impression projected from all this was that Sovietization and Russification of Armenia had been in the best interests of the Armenian people; it had left a very positive impact. What the Soviets never mentioned was the question of human dignity and freedom. Mouradian concludes: "les Arméniens ont tirés de leur histoire une obsession de la durée et de la survie, à n'importe quel prix, fût-ce celui de vivre à genoux en attendant des jours meilleurs. 'Plutôt rouges que morts,' en somme" (1990, 345).

29. Often petty issues became the cause of violent disagreements. For example, the conflict over the tricolor flag goes back to the murder of the archbishop in 1933. The red, blue, and orange flag was the official flag of the short-lived independent republic and since then that of the Tashnag party. The fight over the display of the tricolor is merely symbolic of the greater conflict of what is best for the Armenian people, and what are the best means of achieving these goals. The issue of the flag has now been resolved. The Republic of Armenia has officially

adopted the tricolor as the emblem of its people and nation.

30. It should be noted that the very first "terrorist" act was the killing of two Turkish consular officials in Santa Barbara (CA) on January 28, 1973 by seventy-eight-year-old Gourgen M. Yanikian, a "survivor" who had lost most of his family to the Genocide (Gunter 1986, 32).
31. About 20 "terrorist" attempts are attributed to the ARA and about 150 to the ASALA (Mouradian 1990, 291).
32. See Khachig Tölölyan. Review of *ASALA - Irrational Terror or Political Tool*, by Anat Kurz and Ariel Merari, and *"Pursuing the Just Cause of Their People"* - A Study of Contemporary Armenian Terrorism, by Michael M. Gunter. In *Armenian Reporter*, 24 November 1988, p. 4.
33. For an example see Robert Cullen. "A Reporter at Large: Roots." *New Yorker*, 15 April 1991, pp. 55-76.
34. Among the new leadership are several members of the Karabagh Committee (transformed into the Armenian Pan-National Movement [*Hay Hamaskaine Charjoum*] in November 1989).
35. Armenian-American historian Gerard Libaridian (who was the first non-Soviet person to assume a government position in the Soviet Union as director of the Department of Research and Analysis, Presidium of the Parliament of Armenia [see *Armenian International Magazine,* May 1991, pp. 19-20]) argued, in a lecture delivered in New Jersey, 6 June 1991, that democracy and independence are inseparable goals. It is not possible to further democracy in Armenia without independence. He also noted that the Soviet constitution has provisions for the secession of its republics. The law requires that certain procedures be followed, including a referendum by the people. The process, until the severance of final ties, is scheduled to take five years. See also Libaridian's views in a speech he delivered at the Second Congress of the Armenian National Movement in Yerevan, 25 May 1990, reproduced in his edited volume *Armenia at the Crossroads* (1991).
36. Church and peoplehood were highly intertwined for women survivors of the Genocide. A recent study concurred that to be an Armenian was to be a Christian and vice versa (see Sarkisian 1984, 41).
37. There was one respondent in the study whose religious affiliation was Jewish. The number of Jewish Armenians is likely to increase in the future with increasing intermarriage. It would be interesting to see which one of their inherited identities, if any, they will adopt.
38. Two aspects of religion are are most likely to be sharply differentiated in large metropolitan communities. It has been observed that urban areas encourage less associational, devotional involvement, but more communal ties. However, in small towns, attendance in a local church is necessary to establish social ties, thus making the associational and communal aspects of religion more inseparable than in larger communities. In large places, especially if one felt strongly about organized religion, people do not have to attend services to have contact with members of their socioreligious subcommunity (Fischer 1982, 211-15).
39. Apostolics traditionally have special prayers said for their loved ones for the forty-day and first anniversary of their deaths. Often, other departed relatives are also mentioned in such services.
40. This is similar to the Greek Orthodox faith due to historical circumstances and the legacy of the Ottoman rule. "Religion is not a personal matter, nor is it a

guide to conduct" (Dorothy Lee, quoted in Scourby 1980, 70).

41. Holy Cross Armenian Church in Washington Heights in upper Manhattan is one of the oldest churches in this area and historically has played a pivotal role in Armenian-American history (see Atamian 1955). At present, only old-timers continue to live in the church neighborhood, most of their children and grandchildren having moved to the suburbs or other states. The congregation and administration of the parish is now in the hands of recent immigrants from Istanbul who commute to the church from surrounding suburbs. See also Avakian (1985, 81 et seq.) for a personal description of the Washington Heights Armenian community in the 1940s.
42. See Appendix for questionnaire. Weddings, funerals and holidays were volunteered responses. Had they been printed in the questionnaire, they would have received more responses.
43. The report does not describe the sampling procedure or methods of data collection used in the AREC survey, but it appears that it was a nonrandom sample. Using only Prelacy parishes is another source of bias, but in religious matters, it is assumed that the answers would have been similar if the Diocesan parishes were included. Further, it should be noted that the sample consists only of respondents affiliated with the Armenian church, thus their results are expected to be more conservative than the New York survey.
44. This reflects the average age of the communally involved member (both in sacred and secular spheres); it matches the mean age of participants in the New York sample.
45. The clergy I interviewed said that a non-Christian spouse marrying an Armenian in the Armenian church is asked to convert first. This is not the case for non-Armenian but Christian spouses, even those who are nominally Christian.
46. Quoted in Keoseyan (1981, 72) from *Nation et Religion,* 1980, Milano: ICOM.
47. See also Vigen Guroian. "The Armenian Church in the American Diaspora: Survival or Mission." *Armenian Reporter,* 20 August 1987, p. 2.
48. In sharp contrast, the clergymen I interviewed believed that such issues would not interest their congregations. A foreign-born informant also told me that the church does not have a position on such issues; it is so liberal that it allows every individual to decide on his or her own. What this informant missed is that individuals may want guidance in thinking through some of these issues. "Religion" in the sense used by Pattie above, is supposed to provide formulas for life and death, for suffering and misery, for ties with the supernatural, and so on.
49. See Vigen Guroian. "Armenian Nationalism and the Ferment of Faith." *Christian Century,* 27 February 1991, pp. 233-36.
50. See also "Toward a Diaspora Theology." 1990. *Window: A View of the Armenian Church* 1, n. 2 (Spring): 22-26.
51. Interestingly, these are the reverse proportions to those found in Lebanon (before the Civil War). Bedoyan (1979, 121) estimated that the Armenian Catholics constituted about 15 percent of the Armenians in Lebanon, while the Armenian Protestants were approximately 5 percent, the remaining 80 percent belonged to the Apostolic church. The United States was more attractive to Protestant Armenians than to Catholic Armenians because of their familiarity with the English language and the American culture that they had learned in Protestant missionary institutions. Similarly, Kayal (1970, 276) has noted that Protestant Syrians (and Lebanese) because of their affiliation with the American

Presbyterian church were "better prepared for their encounter with America" and their experience of social mobility was faster. See also Adamic (1940, 132-46) who gives similar reasons for the rapid adaptation of an Armenian Protestant family in America at the turn of the century. The Armenian Catholics were more likely to be francophone. It is only in the last couple of decades that relatively larger numbers of Armenian Catholics have immigrated to the United States. They fled the Arab nationalistic movements in Syria and Egypt and the Civil War in Lebanon.

52. There are approximately 15 percentage points difference in the Apostolic estimate between the New York survey's 65 percent and Mirak's 80 percent. This means 18.75 percent decrease in the number of Apostolics since the early twentieth century. In the Protestant case, the decrease is between 33.3 percent and 50 percent, depending on which of Mirak's estimates is considered, 15 or 20 percent (in the New York sample 10 percent were Protestant).
53. It should be noted that Protestant Armenians are perceived as heretics by the Apostolic majority. This gives the Apostolics a sense of superiority, and a feeling that they are the bona fide representatives of Armenianness.
54. Kayal (1970, 277) has observed that Episcopalians are conceived of as Western equivalents of Eastern Orthodoxy. Warner and Srole (1945, 100) make similar associations in their study of Yankee City and conclude that the "religious affinity between the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Episcopal Church, . . . led to affiliation between the two and more rapid acculturation [and social mobility] of the Armenian group." It is not surprising that a significant number of the respondents in this study (2.3 percent) were members of that congregation.
55. Lenski (1963, 55) has observed that conversion of spouses in mixed marriages to one or the other religion reduces conflict within the nuclear family. Data on such conversions for the New York study are not available. Those who profess no religion are unlikely to convert, yet they might occasionally accompany spouse and children to spouse's church.
56. A recent study suggests that contrary to popular assumptions, cities do not decrease religious attendance. Cities provide more access to churches, and to a variety of churches, all competing for adherents. This competition facilitates mobilization (see Finke and Stark 1988). This implies that where there are no Armenian churches in one's vicinity, one is likely to attend any local church. The case of the Protestant Armenians in Long Island is a case in point; most have become members of local Protestant denominations.
57. Evidence indicates that when a couple have children, there is "often a quickening of religious interest on the part of the new parents. This frequently develops when the problem of transmitting the cultural heritage to the children is faced" (Lenski 1953, 636; see also Mueller and Johnson 1975). The New York data supports these claims. Respondents who attended an Armenian church most frequently (about once a week) were parents of school-age children.
58. Kayal (1970, 276, n. 4) has found that the Syrian Orthodox in America were more likely to send their children to the nearest Protestant Sunday school rather than a Catholic school because of their traditional dislike of Catholics. It might be postulated that this is similar to Apostolic Armenians.
59. Likewise, in a study of young people's attitudes about the Greek Orthodox Church, Scourby (1980, 57) found a similar ambivalence about the use of English in the services. Her informants felt that some Greek should be kept in the service,

otherwise the Greek church would lose its essence. Nonetheless, Greek Orthodox parishes with predominantly later-generation congregations use mostly English and stress the religious over ethnic commitment (Saloutos 1973).

60. Most Saturday schools (for teaching the Armenian language and culture) are run in conjunction with the local church and on church premises (for more details on schools see chap. 4). Also the Armenian Diocese and the Armenian Prelacy each have their separate departments for language instruction. They have even initiated the writing and publication of series of books for teaching Armenian at Saturday schools. It is interesting to note that the Armenian Diocese in New York City offered a one-day crash course in Armenian language for a number of years on the anniversary of the Genocide for beginners, intermediate, and advanced levels. Undoubtedly, such a course serves a purely symbolic function. It is ideally suited for symbolic ethnics.
61. These days, some health-conscious individuals stop eating candy, chocolate cakes, and other sweets during Lent.
62. Phillips (1978) has found that there are approximately 2,000 Ramgavar party members and 3,000 Tashnag party members in the United States. Membership consists of people who have sworn allegiance to the party, pay dues, and attend meetings. According to a community leader I interviewed, there are a maximum of 150 official members of the Tashnag party in the New York and New Jersey area, the overwhelming majority (95 percent) being foreign-born. My informant said that he knew of only three U.S.-born official Tashnag party members. The Ramgavar party consists of 25 or 30 members in the New York area, all of them foreign-born. And there are no more than 5 foreign-born members of the Hunchagian party. The community leader added that to these members the party was a social reality; they had all grown up with it. According to this source, 20 to 25 percent of the Armenian population in New York/New Jersey is pro-Tashnag, an estimate that corresponds to the survey data above. According to a recent article on the Hunchags in *Armenian International Magazine,* on the East Coast the party supports an athletic club, a cultural union, and a monthly paper, *Yeridasrt Hayasdan;* while on the West Coast (i.e., Los Angeles) the party has an athletic club, a cultural union, a Sunday school, and a weekly newspaper, *Masis* . See Aram Arkun, "Hunchakians: Founded More Than a Century Ago to Liberate Armenians from Ottoman Rule, the Social Democratic Hunchakian Party is Now Involved in Strengthening the New Republic of Armenia," *Armenian International Magazine,* March 1991, pp. 26-28.
63. Phillips (1978) provides several incidences on the local scene that demonstrate how the political dichotomy is alienating the young (pp. 244, 259); how one woman was so disgusted with the strife that she became a Jehovah's Witness (p. 240), how a wedding never took place because the bride and groom came from opposite sides of the ideological conflict (pp. 223-30), and how an Italian Catholic daughter-in-law was preferred to one from "the other side" (p. 224).
64. Fifty-six percent of those born in Turkey (26 percent would not); 57 percent of those born in the Middle East (26 percent would not); and 64 percent of those born in Soviet Bloc countries (32 percent would not) said they would attend any Armenian church. By contrast, 29 percent of those born in the United States said they would attend any Armenian church (32 percent would not).
65. The poll was a nonrandom questionnaire distributed to the regular subscribers of the *Armenian Reporter* (mainly in New York and New Jersey) plus an additional

sample of households in Philadelphia and the Boston area). Four hundred and eighty six (486) households responded to this poll. The self-selection of the respondents into the study is biased toward Armenian-Americans who are active and concerned members of their churches and communities. A surprising 75 percent of the sample were dues-paying members of Armenian churches. The Coalition of Church Unity, the group that conducted this survey, has not published the response rate to the questionnaire. The response rate is not likely to be high considering that the *Armenian Reporter* has about 5000 subscribers according to its owner/publisher. Assuming they all received a questionnaire, about 10 percent appear to have responded to the poll.

66. The percentage of the nonaffiliated in the Church Unity Poll is far below the figures reported in the New York study. This confirms that my study included a larger number of American Armenians who were not active in the Armenian community.
67. According to a telephone conversation with an executive officer of the Armenian Assembly, 22 February 1988.
68. For example see special issue, "Teaching about Genocide," *Social Education* (Official Journal of National Council for the Social Studies) 55, 2 (February 1991). It includes an article by Rouben Adalian, academic affairs director of the Armenian Assembly, entitled; "The Armenian Genocide: Context and Legacy." The Armenian Assembly has also published a booklet to help educators entitled: *Armenian Genocide Resource Guide,* 1988.
69. Armenian Assembly of America, *Annual Report,* 1990, p. 1.
70. For example, the Armenian Assembly perceives its task to be the increased involvement of Armenians in the American democratic process, stressing the importance of human rights, promoting public understanding and awareness of Armenian issues (see pamphlet issued by Armenian Assembly of America, *Aims and Accomplishments,* Bulletin 05, no date).
71. The Armenian Assembly does not have grass-roots support, but has trustees who pay at least $1,000 annually. In 1990, there were approximately 350 trustees.
72. Officially, the Armenian Assembly is adamant in declaring that it "competes with no other organization, rivals no group, and is friend and supporter to all. It is non-sectarian and non-partisan in both the Armenian and American contexts. . . . [It] claims no exclusivity in dealing with issues, persons, or institutions" (see pamphlet published by Armenian Assembly, *Aims and Accomplishments,* Bulletin 05, no date).
73. *Zoryan Notes* 3, n. 1, supplement (April 1988).
74. Thirty-five percent of the latter have lived in the United States for over fifteen years and the remaining 15 percent are more recent arrivals (*Zoryan Notes* 3, n. 1 [April 1988]). With the resignation of Gerard Libaridian as director in early 1991 in order to assume a position in the government of Armenia, the Zoryan Institute was left with no one at its helm. Its future remains to be seen.
75. It should be noted that repatriation drives of diaspora Armenians to Armenia SSR were encouraged several times during the seventy-odd years of Soviet domination. On the numbers of *nerkaght* (repatriates), the precise dates, their reception upon arrival, their problems of adaptation, and integration see Mouradian (1990).
76. See special issue: "Armenians in Poland," *Ararat* 31, 124 (Autumn 1990).
77. See Khachig Tölölyan. Review of *ASALA - Irrational Terror or Political Tool,*

by Anat Kurz and Ariel Merari, and *"Pursuing the Just Cause of Their People"* - A Study of Contemporary Armenian Terrorism, by Michael M. Gunter. In *Armenian Reporter*, 24 November 1988, p. 4.

78. Diasporas have concerned Armenian intellectuals for a long time. It is no wonder that a scholarly journal on the subject was the brainchild of an Armenian (see *Armenian International Magazine*, April 1991, 28-31). As executive editor, in his preface to the first issue of *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, Khachig Tölölyan argues that diaspora is the "other" of nation-states. In the modern world, diasporas have proliferated, challenging the legitimacy and effectiveness of nation-states. The main problem of a diaspora is that of borders; the new manifesto calls for a fresh "vision of the world as a 'space' continually reshaped by forces — cultural, political, technological, demographic, and above all economic — whose varying intersections in real estate constitute every 'place' as a heterogeneous and disequilibriated site of production, appropriation, and consumption, of negotiated identity and affect" (Tölölyan 1991, 6). For example in North America, Jews, Armenians, and Greeks, to a lesser extent, have used the vocabulary of a diaspora.
79. A case in point is the election of Richard McOmber, an *odar pesa* (his wife is of Armenian descent), to the presidency of AGBU in 1988. This action was vehemently criticized in the Armenian community, and numerous letters were sent to the editors of the Armenian press (e.g., *Armenian Reporter*, 17 March 1988, p. 3 - letter to the editor).
80. Likewise it was found that Greeks in Norfolk (VA) voted predominantly for the Nixon-Agnew ticket in the 1968 presidential election. Agnew's Greek ancestry swayed the votes of most independents and some Democrats in spite of assimilation (Humphrey and Louis 1973).
81. A major fund-raising black tie banquet was held in Boston's Copley Plaza for about 1,000 guests on Saturday 10 October 1987, for California Governor George Deukmejian. Among the guests were Vice-President George Bush, and Senators Dole, Kennedy, and Pressler. See "Coming of Age of Armenians in Politics," *Armenian Reporter*, 15 October 1987.
82. The Armenian Assembly's special publication *Armenians in America* (1987) is a tribute to those who have succeeded in their respective fields of endeavor as Americans of Armenian descent. This publication enumerates the following Armenian-Americans in public service: George Deukmejian, governor of California; Congressman Charles Pashayan, Jr, representing the 17th district of California (Fresno); Chuck Haytaian, majority leader of New Jersey General Assembly; George Keverian, Speaker of the House of Massachusetts; Julia Tashjian, Connecticut's secretary of state. In addition to these prominent five, there are at least eight more men of Armenian descent who have served in local and national governments intermittently and several aspirants to public office.
83. For contributions to Governor Deukmejian, see e.g., *The Economist*, 21 September 1985.
84. The Armenian Assembly of America issued a report just before the 1988 presidential elections entitled: "Congressional Report Card, 100th Congress (1987- 1988), and Presidential Candidate Questionnaire." Its aim was to supply Armenian-Americans with relevant information on the past record of their elected officials. It is pertinent to repeat here the avowed function of the Armenian Assembly. In their own words, it "seeks to promote the welfare and interests of

Armenian-Americans and to encourage greater community participation in government at the local, state and national levels." All this adds further evidence to the claim of the increasing sophistication of the population under study in the political affairs of the nation.

85. For example, the *New York Times* (22 May 1988) wrote that presidential candidate George Bush was accused by Democrats of pandering to the Armenian-American vote and hoping to elicit the endorsement of California Governor George Deukmejian. Bush used the term Genocide, contrary to Reagan administration policy, in campaign speeches in Fresno, California, where a sizable Armenian-American community resides and where Charles Pashayan, the only congressman of Armenian descent, has his constituency. This is the type of coverage and attention Armenian-Americans would like to receive a little more often.
86. Achieving positions of influence and decision making power is assumed to have a trickle-down effect in terms of rewards, kickbacks, etc. For example, George Deukmejian was asked by *Armenian International Magazine* journalists how many Armenian-Americans he had appointed or nominated for office during his tenure as governor of California. He replied: "You know, people have asked me, 'Why aren't you running again?' and in jest, I've replied: 'Well, I've run out of Armenians to appoint.' Seriously, though, I don't know the exact number, but it's in the hundreds." Then the journalists asked him: "Would it be between 200 and 300?" To this Deukmejian responded: "Yes, so I get kidded a lot by non-Armenians about that, but all of my appointees are extremely qualified individuals and are doing a superb job" (*Armenian International Magazine*, September 1990, p. 12).
87. It is interesting to note that the Armenian Student Association, an educational, social organization for young and not so young people, offers a "Good Citizen Award" (see *Armenian Reporter*, 3 September 1987).
88. On the Armenian lobby in Washington, DC see Tony Halpin and Vartan Oskanian, "Voices on the Hill," *Armenian International Magazine*, April 1991, pp. 10-22. According to the article, the basic tools of a lobbyist are "votes, money, friendship and accurate information." But above all, the issue in question must be in America's national interest. The reader is reminded that the first two prerequisites are in limited supply for Armenian-Americans.
89. The Turkish government is reported to have paid at least $2 million to its American lobbyists in 1989 (see Kevork Imirzian, "Turkish Lobby in America," *Armenian International Magazine*, July 1990, pp. 30-32).
90. To facilitate the task of the ordinary citizen of Armenian descent, ethnic organizations have prepared documents and facsimile letters and lists of officials with their addresses. This package is sent to all those on organizational mailing lists whenever there is a pending bill in Congress or similar need.
91. Zoryan Institute Open University Seminar, 22 October 1988 at Columbia University, New York City.
92. *Armenian Reporter*, 5 November 1987, p. 5.
93. See *Armenian Reporter*, 23 February 1989, p. 1.
94. Ari I. Goldman, "The Armenians, Still 'Like Job's People,'" *New York Times*, 18 December 1988, sec. 4, p. 2.
95. For a critique of diasporan fears of Pan-Turkism, the paralysis in the Armenian collective psyche that has produced a "nation of victims," and the negative

politics of distrust that rationalizes the need for a "third force" to defend the homeland, etc., see "Introduction" in Libaridian 1991.

# 3

# The Armenian-American Community

In the previous chapter, two interdependent institutions, church and politics, cornerstones of the Armenian-American subculture and collective life were examined. The pattern that emerged indicates that these traditional institutions lose their holding power over those in later generations and younger cohorts. Yet, Armenian identity survives, and in a few cases, people seek alternative institutions that are more congruent with their voluntary brand of Armenianness. In this chapter, I look at the remaining aspects of communal life, concentrating on the structural relations of Armenian-Americans as they come together to form a "community" in the United States and on how that community evolves and changes with the passing of generations. Community comprises both the formally organized structure of voluntary associations and the activities they produce and the informal networks of friends and acquaintances—in other words, the Armenian-American subculture. This subculture emerged and developed in response to the specific economic, social, and political conditions consecutive waves of Armenian immigrants and their

offspring encountered in the one hundred years they have lived in the United States of America, as a people.

The focus here is on group boundaries and social relations within and between groups. This is measured by computing the amount of traffic or social contacts across different types of boundaries. It should be noted that there are various levels of inclusion/exclusion and various definitions of insiders/outsiders. For instance, at one level, this study calculates the relative proportion of ties American-born Armenians have with Armenians born in the Middle East and those from Soviet Bloc countries; at another level, it counts the proportion of ties Armenian-Americans as a group have with members of non-Armenian groups. It is hypothesized that the greater the exodus from the Armenian fold, the weaker the boundaries that contain Armenianness and the greater the chances of dispersion into the mainstream.

In the early 1960s, analysts observed that white immigrant groups like the Armenians had adapted remarkably well to American life by altering certain aspects of their imported culture and borrowing other traits from their surrounding environment. Yet, it seemed that immigrant groups continued to retain relatively rigid boundaries. That is, while most Armenian-Americans interacted extensively with members of other ethnic and racial groups in the workplace and neighborhood, they confined their intimate, face-to-face contacts and leisure-time pursuits to fellow Armenians. In sociological terms, this means that structural assimilation had not been achieved because primary group ties were still limited to insiders. There was much speculation at the time whether there would ever be structural assimilation; that is, the dissolution of ethnic boundaries. Since then, one study after the other has conclusively shown that for white ethnic groups, the process has been accomplished. Even the advocates of the revival hypothesis in the 1970s have conceded that there is no return to behavioral forms of ethnicity.

What about the Armenians, the reader should naturally ask. Armenians are no exception. Data prove that a greater and greater proportion of social ties of Armenian-Americans are with non-Armenians. That does not mean that the decline of the Armenian-American community is imminent. Quite the contrary, ethnic communities, especially of numerical minorities like the Armenians, tend to persist in urban settings such as metropolitan New York and

Los Angeles. It is true that the group may be diluted and weakened by those who perforate ethnic boundaries and assimilate into other social worlds. However, as Claude Fischer observes, these "defectors" leave "behind a more purified core of committed ethnic-group members—'a saving remnant'" (1984, 153). In addition, as mentioned in chapter 1, the tendencies of the modern world toward globalization and homogenization make individuals seek different types of small-scale, face-to-face structures to satisfy some of their unmet needs. This desire for community is a nostalgic wish for what they imagine "the good old days" were. Men and women in postindustrial societies such as the United States cannot and do not want to go back to the communities of the past that were characterized by constraints of proximity, social class, caste, race, etc. Commitment to community, today, is a voluntary attachment on the basis of similarity and compatibility. Time and space are no longer fixed, but for short periods, communities of like minds, feelings, and purpose come together to fulfill a number of manifest and latent functions. Thus, ethnic communities among others, though small and volatile in spatial and temporal terms, may continue to thrive in modern contexts.

## The Armenian Community in the USA

Even though Armenians are very small in size relative to other ethnic groups in the United States, in a few metropolitan areas their numbers have become sufficient to warrant the formation of a large array of communal structures. The largest Armenian communities in the United States are to be found in the vicinity of the following cities (in alphabetical order): Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Fresno, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, Providence, San Francisco, and Washington, DC. Some of the smaller communities, often organized around a church and/or charitable organization, are to be found in Phoenix, Tucson (AZ), San Diego (CA), Hartford and other coastal cities (CT), Miami, Fort Lauderdale, Boca Raton (FL), Worcester, Springfield and other towns (MA), Asbury Park and other townships in South Jersey (NJ), Niagara Falls, Syracuse, Rochester (NY), Houston, San Antonio (TX), Racine and nearby cities (WI), and Richmond (VA).

With modern systems of transportation and communication, total isolation from the Armenian world is a matter of individual choice.

Nonetheless, there is evidence that those who have ready access to communal structures are more likely to maintain identity than those who do not. Even if those with easy access do not participate frequently in Armenian organizations and the events they sponsor, their ethnicity is kept in continual revival by chance contacts with Armenian persons, places, topics, and role relationships. Households of Armenian descent in districts with few or no co-ethnics can maintain ties with the Armenian-American community by subscribing to the Armenian press, by receiving the newsletters of various organizations, by telephoning and occasionally visiting relatives and friends (often for weddings and funerals) in places like New York, Los Angeles, and Boston. They can also have Armenian food, books, music, videotapes, and an assortment of souvenirs with Armenian lettering or symbols mailed to them, if they so wish.

In localities with a handful of Armenian families, people sometimes establish their own "mini" community by meeting informally a few times a year for a Labor Day picnic or Thanksgiving dinner, sharing Armenian food, music, gossip, and a game of *tavloo* (backgammon). In geographically isolated households, the options for involvement in the Armenian-American community are somewhat limited to informal ties with family and friends and vicarious participation through the mail and dollar contributions. It should be noted that in most immigrant groups, formal associations have been created as a result of ethnic size and success, rather than as a reaction to social isolation (Fischer 1984, 120).

Thus, a critical mass of Armenian-Americans in a given region is a necessary precondition for a community to exist and flourish. On the one hand, by sheer economies of scale, the larger the group, the greater the complexity of institutions it can carry and the more specialized audiences and clienteles it is able to satisfy. For example, in Los Angeles and New York, organizers of Armenian events can afford to cater to the needs, life-styles, budgets, and fantasies of a diverse group of people. They may offer a concert of chamber music performed by Armenian musicians, scholarly lectures and debates on Armenian history and literature, a dramatic production in Eastern Armenian dialect, a debutante ball for the sons and daughters of affluent families, an exhibition of the works of Archille Gorky, and so on. They are also in a position to nurture their own esoteric medley of

voluntary associations; some of these might be Armenian only in composition, such as soccer teams and professional associations.

On the other hand, the supply side of Armenianness in areas with a heavy concentration of Armenians can stimulate sporadic participation and provide the illusion of vitality. By supply side I mean the availability (and abundance) of Armenian bookstores, grocery stores, restaurants, radio and TV programs, churches, voluntary associations, and so on. Therefore, the larger the size, the greater the complexity of the community, the easier it is to please a significant proportion of the Armenian-American population. Given that symbolic Armenianness rests on an individual's interpretation of ethnicity, one's residential location is an influential, but not a decisive factor in identity maintenance. There will always be men and women of Armenian descent in downtown Los Angles who will choose not to identify with their ancestry; while there might be others in Alabama, Hawaii, or Vermont who might actively try to maintain ties with the Armenian world.

The Armenian-American community, as it exists in centers enumerated above, is not a geographically bound structure. Armenians have not had their own ghettos in the United States, though they have had and still have neighborhoods and towns with high Armenian density, such as Fresno, Hollywood, and Watertown. Residentially, Armenian households are spread throughout a given metropolis and its surrounding suburbs; however, the churches, the church halls, and the premises of Armenian clubs and organizations constitute the ecological locale of the Armenian-American community (see also Phillips 1978, 262). In these locales, the bulk of Armenian communal life takes place: the religious services, the weddings, the funerals, the lectures, the concerts, the dinner dances, the bazaars, the committee meetings, and so on. Zenner's (1985, 124) very eloquent comments about the Jewish community are equally applicable to the Armenians.

> The synagogue, home observances of festivals, Jewish community centers and the like help demarcate a Jewish symbolic arena in both time and space. While many, if not most, Jews only move in and out of the arena a few times a year, others remain in the arena for a wide range of activities. While there is no corporate Jewish body, the activities within the arena and the movements through it indicate that American Jewry retains its vitality.

I define the Armenian-American community as a social construct, a mental image to both insiders and outsiders. The community consists

of social networks of families, friends, acquaintances, as well as institutions and organizations. It comprises formal and informal relations among people of Armenian descent sharing a collective consciousness and concern for people and things Armenian. Instrumental ties often coincide with intimate association as when friends and relatives join the same compatriotic societies to organize fund-raisers or when family groups meet in the Armenian arena at dinner dances or summer picnics. Participation in programs sponsored by Armenian organizations, such as lectures and concerts, has the latent purpose of establishing and sustaining intimate, face-to-face associations with fellow Armenians. Involvement in such associations is likely to emanate we-feelings and be a source of social and emotional fulfillment.

Like the Calabrians, Palermans, and Venetians who were most trusting and loyal of their fellow *campanelismo*, the earliest Armenian immigrants who came to the United States before the Genocide or shortly thereafter, identified each other by the village, town, or district they came from in the "Old Country." Thus, some were *Aintabtzies*, others *Bitlistzies*, or *Vanetzies*, still others *Marashtzies* or *Gesaratzies* (i.e., those from Aintab, Bitlis, Van, Marash, and Caesara, towns in Turkey), and so on. These regional ties and loyalties led to the founding of compatriotic societies: charitable organizations whose aims were to promote educational endeavors in their hometown or province and care for refugees and orphans. According to Mirak (1983), these compatriotic societies started as local efforts in various Armenian communities throughout the United States, but soon developed regional and national unions. There were some twenty-seven Armenian compatriotic societies active in the United States by 1906.

If the manifest function of these compatriotic societies was educational and charitable, their latent function was to reconvene immigrants from the same region, at least occasionally, to exchange news and information and reminisce about old times in the ancestral village or town (Mirak 1983, 174). It is interesting to note that in contrast to compatriotic organizations of other ethnic groups in the United States, Armenian ones did not give "sickness or death benefits for their members. This peculiarity stemmed from the Armenian precept that such contingencies were the responsibility of the

immediate family only and not of the community" (Mirak 1983, 175). Such sentiments continue to prevail today. There is a general reluctance to finance social service agencies (see chap. 1).

Many of these compatriotic societies continue to exist today, though much of their vigor has been sapped. The *Armenian American Almanac* (1990) lists some twenty of these organizations. For example, the Compatriotic Union of Koghi Khoops village (based in Dearborn Heights, MI) was founded in 1900. Its purpose is "to preserve the identity of Armenian men and women of Khoops descent through a group perpetuating fraternity and friendship, and to observe August 1, annually, as Khoops Memorial Day, to pay homage to all deceased Khoopsetzees" (p. 20). Similarly, the General Society of Vasbouragan, established in 1931 with eight chapters and headquarters in Detroit, aims "to keep alive in the hearts of the new generation of Vasbouragan descendants the love of their ancestral lands and strengthen their faith and confidence in the future; to preserve the historic and cultural heritage of the Armenian people; to extend financial aid to "Vanetzie" students to further their education" (p. 20). In other words, such compatriotic societies are limited in scope and their membership consists predominantly of "old-timers." They have little to offer to later-generation Armenian-Americans, except for the proceeds of small scholarship funds established in the past.[1]

Distinctions by towns and regions in Turkey are at present meaningless to most Armenian-Americans, except as historical references to the birthplace of their ancestors. In the place of such regional ties and identifications, Armenian immigrants who came to the United States after World War II distinguish themselves by the host countries they (and their parents) lived in. They are referred to as Iranian-Armenians, Lebanese-Armenians, Romanian-Armenians, Soviet-Armenians and so on. The sociopolitical conditions in these host societies created differences in the way Armenianness was experienced. First, it is worth repeating that Armenian identity in the United States is a matter of voluntary choice, while in most Middle Eastern countries it is ascribed by birth. Second, there are differences in the emphases or focal points various nationality subcommunities place on Armenian maintenance because of their prior experiences.

For instance, in Lebanon, powerful political parties influenced Armenian community life and politicized ethnicity; while in Istanbul,

the church and schools were the only suprafamilial institutions allowed to function by the Turkish government; thus communal life came to be centered around them. Once in America, Lebanese-Armenians are more likely to join political and charitable organizations, such as the Homenetmen Armenian General Athletic Union, Hamazkayin Armenian Cultural Association, and others under the umbrella of the Tashnag party, or AGBU and Tekeyan Cultural Association, under the auspices of the Ramgavar party. Turkish-Armenian immigrants are more likely to support the Apostolic church by joining church choirs,[2] serving on parish councils, and becoming members of the Knights of Vartan—a fraternal organization whose purpose is to preserve Armenian culture (including the church) in the United States.[3]

The formal and informal groupings of the Armenian community in metropolitan areas crisscross each other. Some formal organizations have a broader set of aims and are open to and welcoming of both American-born and foreign-born members, while other organizations have more specific aims and generally cater to particular groups or subcommunities. Likewise, certain immigrants are more familiar with Armenian-American voluntary associations and readily join the local chapters once they settle in the United States, while others keep more to themselves and have established their own associations because of language, dialect, socioeconomic and other distinctions.[4]

AGBU (Armenian General Benevolent Union) is an example of an organization that covers a broad range of educational, cultural, and charitable projects in the United States and diaspora aimed at preserving and promoting Armenian language, identity, and heritage. It also plans and finances an extensive program of activities annually in many communities; occasionally, it has even hired professionals to take care of specific projects.[5] Its members are both American-born and foreign-born,[6] they are more likely to come from affluent socioeconomic backgrounds, and have Ramgavar and *chezok* (nonpartisan) political orientations.

On the other hand, alumni associations of Armenian high schools in Aleppo, Beirut, Cairo, Istanbul, and Nicosia are a common form of particularistic organization. Their membership is restricted to alumni, their families and friends; they sponsor several fund-raising activities per year, and at least part of their proceeds are earmarked for the

schools in the "Old Country." For example, Essayan-Getronagan Alumni, Inc. represents a girls' and a boys' high school in Istanbul and has been active in New York City for the last couple of decades. Similarly, the Armenian Evangelical College Students' Association is for graduates of a coeducational high school in Beirut.[7] Other examples of particularistic organizations for recent immigrants are: The Armenian Society of New York, for predominantly affluent Iranian-Armenians whose communal life evolves mostly in their center in Little Neck, Long Island; and the Armenian-American Support and Educational Center in Palisades Park, New Jersey, which caters to Turkish-speaking, skilled and semi-skilled artisans, and small businessmen with relatively low educational skills.

Most of these particularistic voluntary associations, like the compatriotic societies before them, have charitable and educational objectives; however, their underlying purpose is to meet the social-psychological needs of the immigrant generation. These organizations cushion the assimilative process; while maintaining ties to their countries of origin, providing companionship and community, they promote acculturation. That is, they turn immigrants into American citizens who are proud of their ethnic identity. In the final analysis, by encouraging education, providing grants, loans, and scholarships, Armenian voluntary associations seek status and recognition for their people in the larger American society.

When Armenian-Americans talk about "the community," what do they mean? The Armenian-American community has an amorphous structure depending upon one's definition. At its core is a group of ethnics, predominantly from the first and second generations, who are highly active in the churches and formal organizations, both as audience and participants, and as leaders and organizers. Their primary group ties, that is their intimate relations and leisure-time pursuits, are likewise mostly with fellow Armenians. In terms of size, this group is the smallest in relative and absolute numbers. This core group is to be contrasted to those people of Armenian descent who continue to identify with and take pride in their Armenian heritage but are almost totally absent from organized communal life. Their family networks and friends are likewise predominantly inactive in the Armenian world. These are the most assimilated, the most symbolic of ethnics. In between those with maximum communal participation and

those with almost none, there are those who sporadically attend Armenian religious services, cultural performances, or social events. Their primary associations are with both Armenians and non-Armenians. Even though all three groups described above are identified as Armenian-American, in this study, *the Armenian-American community* is understood to consist only of the core group of maximally involved Armenians in primary and secondary relationships and those in the periphery with intermediate degrees of participation.[8]

A caveat is in order here. I have described and referred to the Armenian-American community, but it would be more appropriate to discuss *communities or subcommunities*. The Armenian-American community is not a monolithic structure. To outsiders it gives the impression of a cohesive entity; however, internally the community is fragmented[9] into various subcommunities: politically/ideologically, generationally, by country of origin, by denomination, by social class, by cohort. Often the linkages between these groupings are not powerful enough or loyalties are too differentiated to mobilize very large numbers of people of Armenian descent. Moreover, I repeat my earlier contention that the Armenian-American community or subcommunities have almost no influence in drawing the support and participation of the organizationally unaffiliated people of Armenian descent.

I would like to argue further that there are few structural links between the various subcommunities. For example, in selling tickets for social benefits such as concerts, in spite of extensive advertising in community papers and mailings, the organization sponsoring the event is generally unable to induce the support and participation of people outside its own network. This should not be surprising because according to Katz and Lazarsfeld's (1955), research in diffusion and mass communication, people do not act on information supplied by the mass media unless it is transmitted by somebody they know. That is, word of mouth is more effective than media advertisement. Because of breaks in structural linkages between the various subcommunities, the spread of information and more active forms of mobilization on a massive scale is often handicapped. The commemoration of the Armenian Genocide is another example. As one of the most powerful symbols for rallying people of Armenian descent, public ceremonies so far have not been able to enlist the participation of large crowds,

even for the seventieth and seventy-fifth anniversary. Overall, the total number of persons physically present at such rallies remains only a fraction of the estimated number of people of Armenian descent who live in the area where such events are organized.[10]

Structurally then, it might be argued that the Armenian-American community appears to be made up of semi-insulated subcommunities. Network theory provides a conceptual framework that may help explain the lack of social cohesion among Armenian-Americans. It has been suggested that if a community is partitioned into small networks and cliques, community-level organization and mobilization will be inhibited because paths or bridges from any given leader to community-wide rank-and-file followers will be reduced by lack of trust (Granovetter 1973). Indeed, there are few leaders that are known and respected by the entire Armenian-American community.[11]

Instead of a structural explanation, Talai (1984), after studying the Armenian community of Greater London, suggested that the absence of centralization and coordination among the voluntary associations is related to the lack of particularistic, instrumental, rational goals. She described these associations as diffuse; that is, they are to be contrasted to Max Weber's classic depiction of formal organizations—they do not have specific aims and do not follow rational bureaucratic procedures. Such associations maintain their viability if they can recruit a cadre of volunteer staff and members. Recruitment efforts have to rely on persuasion and subtle obligations to people's ascriptive identities. Members must want to join these associations, since most of Armenian communal life takes place in one's leisure time. Such associations are secondary or have little relevance to one's occupational and domestic life.

The more diffuse the organizational framework and the more ambiguous the aims of the association, the greater its capability of appealing to larger sections of a very heterogeneous Armenian population. About twenty-two autonomous, often competitive voluntary associations have emerged to serve the varying interests, attitudes, and experiences of the Armenian population in London. If, on the one hand, the diffuse and loosely articulated structures of these associations are functional for mobilizing a wider cross-section of Armenians, on the other hand, they have prevented the development of permanent overarching communal facilities and effective lobbying

groups that could coordinate general interests of the community. Thus, the lack of community-wide cooperation, according to Talai, is due to the nature of the organizational structure of the Armenian community.[12] Talai adds:

> The objective of mobilizing an ethnic group en masse and the objective of promoting explicit and specific political, economic and social aims on its behalf are not easily reconcilable. For these objectives call forth organizational tendencies pulling in opposite directions. It is not surprising therefore that we often find that it takes rare moments of acute crisis for these objectives to truly merge. (1984, 201)

The Armenian community of London differs from that of New York or Los Angeles mainly in its smaller size[13] and the fact that the majority of its adult population are first-generation immigrants. However, the same rationale could be applied to the community in the United States. The various particularistic Armenian-American organizations described above could enlist the support and participation of most of the first generation and second generation; however, not a single organization is able on its own to speak for the entire community in the United States or mobilize it.

## Organizational Participation of the New York Sample

The Armenian-American community in metropolitan New York and New Jersey boasts a rich array of voluntary associations to suit almost every life-style, and interest. Organizational participation is measured by questions on membership, positions of responsibility, and frequency of attendance in Armenian and non-Armenian voluntary associations; as well as by attendance at events and activities sponsored by ethnic organizations. The sample was provided with a list of eleven types of voluntary associations; respondents were asked to check the number of Armenian and non-Armenian organizations they belonged to in each category.

### *Membership in Voluntary Associations*

About half of the respondents do not belong to any voluntary associations: Armenian (53.9 percent) or non-Armenian (48.9 percent). Professional associations (27 percent), charities (19 percent)

and American political parties (16 percent) are the most cited organizational affiliations in the non-Armenian world. Within the Armenian community, charities (24 percent), church committees (23 percent), cultural organizations (12 percent) and compatriotic societies (11 percent) are the most popular. Armenian political parties (1.7 percent) have the lowest rate of appeal.

Generational presence in the United States is an important explanatory variable in organizational membership; as membership in

**TABLE 3.1**
**Frequency Distribution of Membership in Armenian Voluntary Associations by Generation**
**(in rank order of multiple response)**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | Later Generation | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 269 (cases) | (126) | (117) | (26) | |
| Charitable organization (138 responses) | 50.0 | 43.5 | 6.5 | 100.0 |
| Church group (134 responses) | 42.5 | 48.5 | 9.0 | 100.0 |
| Cultural organization (71 responses) | 52.1 | 35.2 | 12.6 | 100.0 |
| Compatriotic society (65 responses) | 52.3 | 44.6 | 3.0 | 100.0 |
| Choir (46 responses) | 58.7 | 34.8 | 6.5 | 100.0 |
| Scholarly association (39 responses) | 43.6 | 41.0 | 15.4 | 100.0 |
| Student association (32 responses) | 46.9 | 40.6 | 12.6 | 100.0 |
| Sports organization (25 responses) | 48.0 | 40.0 | 12.0 | 100.0 |
| Dance group (12 responses) | 41.7 | 33.3 | 25.0 | 100.0 |
| Professional association (11 responses) | 63.6 | 27.3 | 9.1 | 100.0 |
| Political party (10 responses) | 90.0 | 10.0 | 0.0 | 100.0 |

Armenian voluntary associations decreases generationally, membership in non-Armenian ones increases (though the proportion of foreign-born respondents in nonethnic organizations is not negligible). Of all the foreign-born respondents in this sample, 57.5 percent belong to Armenian organizations; of those in the second generation, 43 percent belong to ethnic organizations; and of all the later-generation ethnics, 27.9 percent do so. In comparison, 35.6 percent of the first generation, 57.7 percent of the second-generation,

**TABLE 3.2**
**Frequency Distribution of Membership in non-Armenian Voluntary Associations by Generation**
**(in rank order of multiple response)**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | Later Generation | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 298 (cases) | (78) | (157) | (63) | |
| Professional association (154 responses) | 27.6 | 50.6 | 22.0 | 100.0 |
| Charitable organization (110 responses) | 24.5 | 57.3 | 18.2 | 100.0 |
| Political party (93 responses) | 22.6 | 54.8 | 22.6 | 100.0 |
| Cultural organization (81 responses) | 25.9 | 54.3 | 19.8 | 100.0 |
| Scholarly association (73 responses) | 17.8 | 58.9 | 23.3 | 100.0 |
| Church group (58 responses) | 22.4 | 63.8 | 13.7 | 100.0 |
| Sports organization (53 responses) | 17.0 | 54.7 | 28.3 | 100.0 |
| Student association (29 responses) | 27.6 | 55.2 | 17.1 | 100.0 |
| Civic organization (21 responses) | 28.0 | 68.0 | 4.0 | 100.0 |
| Choir (18 responses) | 22.2 | 61.1 | 16.7 | 100.0 |
| Dance group (7 responses) | 14.3 | 71.4 | 14.3 | 100.0 |

and 67.7 percent of the third or fourth generations belong to non-Armenian organizations (see tables 3.1 and 3.2).

For later-generation respondents, folk dance groups are the most popular type of ethnic organizational membership. Otherwise, they constitute less than a tenth of the membership of all organizations, and they are totally absent from Armenian politics. In sharp contrast, the foreign-born compose 90 percent of American political parties and they are the majority in every other type of organization with the exception of church committees where the second generation predominate. Foreign-born respondents constitute 50 percent of all members of Armenian voluntary associations, while they form less than 40 percent of the sample. Respondents born in the Middle East are most likely among the foreign-born to be "joiners" of voluntary organizations. Sixty percent of them join Armenian organizations and 39 percent of them non-Armenian ones.

There is a direct, monotonic relationship between education and membership in non-Armenian associations. The higher the educational level, the higher the probability that a person of Armenian descent will join nonethnic voluntary associations. That is, 3.4 percent of respondents with less than high school education 15.3 percent of those who have finished high school, 21.1 percent of respondents with some college education, 24.5 percent of college graduates, and 35.7 percent of those with more than a college degree join non-Armenian organizations. It is intriguing that education had little effect on joining Armenian voluntary associations. About 26 percent of respondents who have a high school diploma were members of Armenian organizations, as did 22 percent of those who completed college and 24 percent of those with graduate or professional education. It appears that for first and second generations, irrespective of educational attainment, the needs Armenian associations fulfill are not matched by American organizations in terms of providing prestige, status, and companionship. The observation that "I'd rather be a big fish here than nobody out there" (Lopata 1964, 216) is true of many people's fears and apprehensions in choosing to remain within the ethnic fold.

In examining organizational leadership, respondents were asked if they held a position of responsibility such as officer, secretary, treasurer, or chairperson in Armenian and non-Armenian voluntary organizations. Overall, slightly more respondents were active in

Armenian than in non-Armenian organizations (17.6 percent vs. 12.9 percent). This is to be expected given the general ethnic bias of this sample and the higher proportion of respondents who came from Armenian church mailing lists. Generation does not affect the leadership composition of Armenian voluntary associations, but religious affiliation does (see tables 3.3, 3.4). Typically, those affiliated with the Apostolic church are leaders in Armenian associations, and those with "other" denominations are leaders in non-Armenian associations. Protestant Armenians are almost equally divided in both worlds. Furthermore, 8.6 percent of later-generation respondents held positions of responsibility when later generations constituted 9.7 percent of all memberships in Armenian organizations. This means that past the second generation, when men and women of Armenian descent enter the Armenian world, they are highly motivated and committed to it and become very active in leadership roles. By then, participation in the Armenian-American community becomes a true choice, since one becomes comfortably American with enough distance from immigrant origins and parental pressure. Therefore, lukewarm ties are either strengthened or severed.

In examining the frequency of attendance at meetings of voluntary associations, it was found that nearly half (44 percent) of the sample remain almost totally absent from all types of organizational meetings, Armenian and non-Armenian. Fifteen percent attended Armenian meetings and only 9 percent attended non-Armenian meetings, almost always (see tables 3.5 and 3.6). Attending meetings of Armenian voluntary associations decreases with later generations (.18*), nonethnic denominations, or no religion (.21*). On the other hand, attending the meetings of a non-Armenian voluntary association was not statistically correlated with any of the independent variables.

### *Participation in Communally Hosted Events*

To measure the frequency of participation in activities sponsored by Armenian voluntary associations, respondents were provided with a list of thirteen different types of events commonly held in the community, and were asked how often they attended each in the year prior to the survey. Frequency of attending activities sponsored by Armenian organizations is influenced by the number of times such

activities are held in any given year. For such an estimate, I have tallied the total number of events in each category that were held by the Armenian community of metropolitan New York and New Jersey in 1986 by following the announcements published in the Calendar of Coming Events section of the local English-language weekly, the *Armenian Reporter*. These are the events that were open to the general public, there were others that were not advertised in this particular paper.[14] The figures presented below are for 1986; however, it is believed that more or less an equal number of events were sponsored by Armenian organizations in 1985, the year respondents were asked to report about.

In 1986, there were approximately 74 dinner dances (including banquets, cotillons, debutante balls, dances, etc), 10 *kef* nights,[15] 35 luncheons (such as Lenten luncheon, women saint's day lunch, mother's day luncheon, Ladies' Guild brunch and fashion show; as well as testimonials, ground-breaking and dedication ceremonies that included lunch), and an additional 9 receptions/banquets for membership meetings, reunions, and the like. In the summer months, there were 15 picnics and garden parties. These make up a total of 143 events that consisted of a meal, lunch, or dinner, plus other entertainment or program. On average, there were 3 such socials per week.

In contrast to mostly social gatherings, there were a total of 79 events that could be classified as cultural. There were 25 musical

**TABLE 3.3**
**Frequency Distribution of Respondents Holding Positions of Responsibility in Armenian and Non-Armenian Voluntary Associations by Generation (in percent)**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 582 | (218) | (271) | (36) | (41) | (16) |
| Respondents in Armenian associations | 18.9 | 19.2 | 11.1 | 10.0 | 0.0 |
| Respondents in non-Armenian Associations | 8.7 | 15.1 | 16.6 | 19.5 | 6.2 |

concerts including 1 at Avery Fisher Hall, Lincoln Center. Three folk dance shows[16] were performed including 1 in Carnegie Hall. Only 5 art exhibitions were advertised, there could have been others because of the high percentages of respondents who visited art shows. Thirty lectures were given on Armenian history and culture, and 6 others on non-Armenian subjects.[17] Lectures in the Armenian community, whatever the subject matter, are generally delivered in English. There were 10 theatrical events[18] comprising 3 plays, 2 talent shows, and 5 poetry readings and dramatizations.

The third type of activity was food sales, rug sales, bazaars, book fairs, and the like. There were a total of 17 such bazaars and 1 major

**TABLE 3.4**
**Frequency Distribution of Respondents Holding Positions of Responsibility in Armenian and Non-Armenian Voluntary Associations by Religious Affiliation (in percent)**

| | Apostolic Armenian | Protestant Armenian | Catholic Armenian | Other (Non-Arm.) | No Religion |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 573 | (268) | (56) | (22) | (91) | (36) |
| Respondents in Armenian associations | 22.3 | 23.2 | 9.1 | 3.3 | 5.6 |
| Respondents in non-Armenian associations | 7.6 | 19.6 | 9.1 | 30.4 | 16.6 |

**TABLE 3.5**
**Frequency Distribution of Respondents Attending Meetings of Armenian Voluntary Associations by Generation**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 580 | (218) | (269) | (36) | (41) | (16) |
| Hardly ever | 56.4 | 72.5 | 72.2 | 87.8 | 87.5 |
| Some of the time | 22.9 | 14.1 | 19.4 | 2.4 | 6.3 |
| Almost always | 20.6 | 13.4 | 8.3 | 9.8 | 6.3 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

street festival, the One World Festival.[19] The sports events advertised in the weekly newspaper tally to only 2 regional championships, no doubt regular matches were not mentioned.[20] There were 11 conventions or weekends for a variety of age groups and organizations. Probably one of the most popular weekends with American-born Armenians is the long established Armenian Student Association's[21] annual convention held along the Northeastern seaboard in the summer. I counted 8 events for the commemoration of the Armenian Genocide on and around April 24. These consisted of 3 requiems[22] in the city, a rally at Times Square, a concert at Avery Fisher Hall, a march for the survivors, a tree planting ceremony, and a one-day crash course to teach the Armenian language for beginners and advanced students.

For comparative purposes I have also tallied the total number of activities listed in the Calendar of Events section of the three major English-language newspapers on the East Coast for 1990. The *Armenian Weekly* is published in Watertown by the Hairenik Association, for the Armenian Revolution Federation (Tashnag party), the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* is also published in Watertown and is the organ of the Ramgavar party. The *Armenian Reporter,* as mentioned above, is nonpartisan and published in New York. Together these three weeklies provide a fairly accurate picture of Armenian communal life on the Eastern seaboard. I have tried not to duplicate the listings, because even though each paper specializes in a particular audience, set of sponsoring organizations, and region, all three tend to print ads that are sent to them.

**TABLE 3.6**
**Frequency Distribution of Respondents Attending Meetings of Non-Armenian Voluntary Associations by Generation**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 580 | (217) | (270) | (36) | (41) | (16) |
| Hardly ever | 82.0 | 65.9 | 75.0 | 73.2 | 81.3 |
| Some of the time | 9.2 | 24.1 | 16.7 | 22.0 | 12.5 |
| Almost always | 8.8 | 10.0 | 8.3 | 4.9 | 6.3 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

TABLE 3.7
**Ratio of Favorite Activity: Proportion of Sample Attended Activity by Number of Times Activity Held per Year (by rank order)**

| | Proportion of Sample | Number of Activities | Ratio |
|---|---|---|---|
| Festival | 44.4 | 2 | 22.2 |
| Folk dance show | 27.6 | 3 | 9.2 |
| Art exhibition | 34.5 | 5 | 6.9 |
| Sports matches | 11.0 | 2 | 5.5 |
| April 24 events | 39.3 | 8 | 4.9 |
| Picnic | 51.8 | 15 | 3.4 |
| Bazaar | 54.9 | 17 | 3.2 |
| *Kef* night | 25.0 | 10 | 2.5 |
| Theater | 24.9 | 10 | 2.4 |
| Concert | 45.8 | 25 | 1.8 |
| Lecture | 30.7 | 36 | 0.85 |
| Dinner dance | 42.3 | 74 | 0.57 |

TABLE 3.8
**Number of Activities Hosted by the Major Armenian-American Communities of the East Coast in 1990 as Listed in the Calendar of Events of the *Armenian Weekly*, the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, and the *Armenian Reporter***

| | NY/NJ | Boston | Other MA | Philadelphia | Providence | Hartford |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Folk dance show | 3 | 2 | - | 1 | - | - |
| Art exhibition | 4 | 6 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Sports matches | 7 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 1 | - |
| April 24 events | 7 | 5 | 3 | - | - | - |
| Picnic | 16 | 9 | 2 | - | 1 | 1 |
| Bazaar | 11 | 8 | 2 | - | 2 | - |
| *Kef* night | 12 | 5 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Theater | 5 | 3 | - | - | - | - |
| Musical concert | 15 | 8 | 2 | 2 | 1 | - |
| Lecture | 26 | 24 | 4 | 1 | 2 | - |
| Banquet/dance | 74 | 61 | 7 | 9 | 9 | 3 |
| Weekend | 7 | 6 | 3 | 1 | - | 1 |
| Total | 187 | 141 | 30 | 16 | 16 | 5 |

The activities are categorized as above. The geographical areas are divided into New York/New Jersey; Greater Boston (which includes Belmont, Brookline, Cambridge, Lexington, and Watertown); other cities in Massachusetts (such as Lowell, Springfield, and Worcester); Philadelphia; and Providence and Hartford (includes New Britain). Table 3.8 shows the distribution of activities by region. In addition, the *Armenian Weekly* provided listings for the Midwest (i.e., Chicago, Detroit, Racine; a total of 17 events, mostly sports tournaments and April 24 commemorations); and Richmond (one picnic and two banquets/dances); and the *Mirror-Spectator* listed a total of three dinner dances for Chelmsford (NH). Comparing the 1990 with 1986 listings for New York and New Jersey suggests that there have been few changes during this short period of time. Interestingly, the minor decreases in number of events hosted are in theater productions, concerts, and lectures—all three categories with specialized audiences.

This tally proves the point I made at the beginning of this chapter. Metropolitan New York and Boston have, by far, the largest Armenian institutional structures on the East Coast. Even though I am unable to

**TABLE 3.9**
**Number of Times Respondents Participated in Activities Sponsored by Armenian Voluntary Associations (by rank order)**

| | Never | 1 to 2 | 3 to 5 | 6 & More | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 583 | | | | | |
| Bazaar/ rug sale | 45.1 | 41.3 | 12.7 | 0.8 | 100.0 |
| Picnic | 48.2 | 41.0 | 9.3 | 1.6 | 100.0 |
| Concert | 54.2 | 31.4 | 12.2 | 2.1 | 100.0 |
| Armenian festival | 55.6 | 42.5 | 1.4 | 0.5 | 100.0 |
| Dinner dance | 57.7 | 25.2 | 12.2 | 4.8 | 100.0 |
| April 24 events | 60.7 | 34.5 | 4.1 | 0.7 | 100.0 |
| Art exhibition | 65.5 | 29.0 | 4.8 | 0.7 | 100.0 |
| Lecture | 69.3 | 21.6 | 6.3 | 2.8 | 100.0 |
| Folk dance show | 72.4 | 23.4 | 2.9 | 1.0 | 100.0 |
| *Kef* night | 75.0 | 17.7 | 6.2 | 1.1 | 100.0 |
| Armenian theater | 75.1 | 18.4 | 6.0 | 0.5 | 100.0 |
| Armenian convention | 82.7 | 16.0 | 1.2 | 0.2 | 100.0 |
| Sports matches | 89.0 | 6.2 | 2.6 | 2.3 | 100.0 |

provide the same information for the West Coast, there is little doubt about the prominence of Los Angeles. It is easy to imagine that people of Armenian descent who live in Boston, Los Angeles, or New York have more choice in community participation than someone living in Richmond or Hartford. Economies of scale increase the supply side of Armenianness and allegedly help keep identity in continual revival.

**TABLE 3.10**
**Frequency Distribution of Respondents Participating in Activities Sponsored by Armenian Voluntary Associations by Generation**
**(in rank order of multiple response)**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | Later Generation | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 484 (cases) | (197) | (221) | (66) | |
| Bazaar (320 responses) | 40.9 | 49.4 | 9.7 | 100.0 |
| Picnic (302 responses) | 44.0 | 48.7 | 7.3 | 100.0 |
| Concert (267 responses) | 47.9 | 41.9 | 10.1 | 100.0 |
| Festival (259 responses) | 41.7 | 46.3 | 12.0 | 100.0 |
| Dinner dance (246 responses) | 46.7 | 43.1 | 10.2 | 100.0 |
| April 24 events (229 responses) | 53.7 | 37.6 | 8.7 | 100.0 |
| Art exhibition (201 responses) | 40.8 | 45.8 | 13.5 | 100.0 |
| Lecture (180 responses) | 47.8 | 40.6 | 11.6 | 100.0 |
| Folk dance show (161 responses) | 51.6 | 41.6 | 6.9 | 100.0 |
| Theater (145 responses) | 58.6 | 37.2 | 4.2 | 100.0 |
| *Kef* night (144 responses) | 41.7 | 44.4 | 13.9 | 100.0 |
| Armenian convention (101 responses) | 47.5 | 41.6 | 10.9 | 100.0 |
| Sports matches (64 responses) | 54.7 | 34.4 | 11.0 | 100.0 |

To have a rough estimate of the popularity of these communally held activities, I have tabulated a ratio of "favorite activity" from the percentage of the sample attending any given type of activity by the approximate number of times such an event was held in one year. Table 3.7 shows the results by rank order. Festivals are the most popular event. Even though these are held once or twice a year, record numbers of people attend such events. Ethnic festivals are *par excellence* the form of organizational participation ideally suited for symbolic ethnics. Concerts and lectures on the other hand, have very specialized audiences. Similarly, dinner dances are a particular form of entertainment with a small group of aficionados who repeatedly attend this type of event. Dinner dances, lectures, and concerts receive the highest frequency of repeat attendance (see table 3.9).

Generation remains the most significant factor in community participation. Table 3.10 further supports the claim that the Armenian-American community of metropolitan New York and New Jersey is predominantly a first- and second-generation phenomenon. Only 13.6 percent of the total participants in communal activities are from the third or later generations. There is almost a straight line increase in complete absence from communal activities by generation. In 1985, 10 percent of foreign-born, 19 percent of the U.S.-born with foreign-born parents, 31 percent of those with one U.S.-born parent, 22 percent of those with two U.S.-born parents and 44 percent of those with at least one U.S.-born grandparent did not take part in activities hosted by Armenian voluntary associations. Generally, American-born generations are proportionally more likely to participate in activities that are not too demanding and do not require knowledge of culture and language, such as bazaars, picnics, and festivals. Noteworthy is the popularity of Armenian theater with the foreign-born. Even lectures, concerts, and folk dance performances have proportionally more foreign-born audiences.

Foreign-born senior citizens who personally experienced the massacres and deportations are most prominently present at commemorative events for the Armenian Genocide (April 24).[23] With increasing generational presence in America, even the Genocide loses its impact and urgency on people of Armenian descent. This does not mean that they become insensitive to what happened to their forefathers at the turn of the century. As will be clarified in chapter 5,

few respondents are indifferent; however, these sentiments do not easily translate into action. Fewer and fewer later-generation Armenian-Americans attend rallies, public marches, even requiems.

*Rationale for Community Participation*

Several respondents felt the need to justify their lack of involvement in the Armenian community. I have counted approximately eight different reasons for being alienated temporarily or permanently from Armenian communal life. One excuse is lack of time. A thirty-nine-year-old, third-generation woman wrote: "My own lack of involvement with participation in Armenian organizations has more to do with lack of time than lack of interest. More often than not, I am out of town when some meeting or function that would have interested me is taking place."

Other reasons are ill health, old age, death and sickness in the family, or a combination of these. A sixty-five-year-old woman, born in Turkey, who immigrated at age six, noted that she did not participate in any activities, adding, "I have in the past, due to ill health this year." Another middle-aged, second-generation woman said, "Low key last year because of death in the family." A foreign-born woman who grew up in the United States wrote, "When I was young I belonged to many Armenian functions. When you are seventy-eight years old???" Yet another foreign-born woman repeated, "I used to belong to these when I was younger." A ninety-two-year-old man who did not participate in any communal activities remarked, "Ill all of 1985—still too ill." A sixty-seven-year-old woman who grew up in America since she was three, observed: "We do not attend or participate in any [of] above [activities] now due to age and ill health. But in our earlier years as family with two children we attended to all of above and exposed our growing children to Armenian oriented environment." A foreign-born father was inactive because his twelve-year-old child was autistic and hyperactive and needed his parents' constant attention; he added, "No time or energy left to involve in the community activities as an active member. That is the reason for my passive life."

In the previous chapter, I quoted from several respondents who did not attend Armenian church regularly because of geographic distance.

For the same reason, people are not able to attend Armenian communal events. For example, a senior citizen wrote: "Not active in the community as don't drive and limited mostly to walking." Another retired man who was born in the United States of an Armenian father and an English mother wrote: "When we lived in North Jersey we did go to Armenian dinners, picnics etc., but since moving down to Cape May, NJ, we do not come in contact with many Armenians." A college student whose mother's parents were born in Turkey said: "Since I left for school my Armenian activities have decreased greatly because there are no organized groups here. I used to be more involved in NYC & Columbia groups & activities—attending lectures, parties, performances."

The passing away of the immigrant generation may sever the last ties a person of Armenian descent may have to the ethnic community. A fifty-three-year-old U.S.-born man with an Armenian father and an Italian mother wrote: "Have lost touch with Armenian activities since my father's death in 1969. He was active in his ethnic background." Disillusionment with Armenian factionalism is yet another reason for being alienated from communal life, especially when other alternatives are readily available. For example, a fifty-two-year-old, second-generation man wrote: "I was for many years very active in Armenian affairs. I became disillusioned with all of the fruitless factionalism and fighting. Upon marrying a non-Armenian, I found other organizations to work in, although I still have strong feelings and support for the Armenian people and its nationhood."

Some years are different from others. A middle-aged, second-generation woman who did not participate in any Armenian communal activities wrote: "1985 was an atypical year. We would sometimes attend festival, picnics etc." Indeed, communal involvement is not constant over time, nor is ethnic identity for that matter. Since ethnicity is contextual, one's absorption in ethnic circles may fluctuate during different stages of one's life course.

Several respondents observed that their interest and involvement in the Armenian community had changed over the years. For example, a thirty-three-year-old man who like his mother and father is U.S.-born wrote:

> My involvement with the Armenian community seems to be typical of many of my friends: no interest through high school and college because I had many American

> friends to socialize with, despite the constant prodding of my mother to join the Armenian community. After college, when I entered new social environs, I took a chance with Armenian groups. My involvement over the last 10 years has steadily grown in various organizations, to a level today which is probably much heavier than the average person.

Similarly, another forty-five-year-old man who like his mother is U.S.-born said: "We were an Americanized family; as children, my sibling and I were reluctant participants in the Armenian community, although always cognizant of being Armenian. Interestingly though, as each of us reached our late teens we became more involved in our ethnicity and expanded our friendships in the Armenian community."

The last two quotes point to an identity search in early adulthood. This stage in the life course is also a time for establishing friendships, and for mating. Some young people of Armenian descent may find a ready-made community to fulfill their needs. Those who find spouses within the community are more likely to stay, others will search elsewhere, decreasing the probability of their staying in the ethnic fold subsequently. Several community leaders I interviewed believed that the lack of interest of the young people in church and Armenian community is temporary. A parish priest told me: "This is kind of natural, but they will come back to the Armenian community as soon as they get married and have their own children. They want to baptize their children in the Armenian church, send them to Sunday and Saturday school." The quantitative data does not support the life course hypothesis in community involvement. Even though empty nest couples were the most frequent attenders in Armenian communal life (92 percent), followed by singles of all ages (88 percent), and the least active were senior citizens (76 percent), the variations between the different stages of the life cycle were not statistically significant.

### *The* Odar *Spouse*

Second only to generation, ancestry decreases participation in the organized Armenian community. While 14 percent of those who have two Armenian parents did not participate in any activity, 39 percent of those with mixed parentage did not. Knowledge of the way the Armenian-American community sanctions intermarried couples is impressionistic, to say the least. As a rule of thumb, however, the institutionalized community is not very welcoming of *odar* [non-

Armenian] spouses. The anger of a thirty-year-old intermarried respondent (father U.S.-born, mother born in Syria) portrays one outcome: "I've ... resented the fact that people who are married to other Armenians frown upon my marrying an 'odar.' There isn't one week that goes by without some alluding to this fact."

Some social critics find the laissez-faire policy of Armenian churches and organizations detrimental to the very survival of the community. Thus, according to Aharonian, who examined the extent of intermarriage in the parishes of the Eastern Diocese over several decades, "the problem is not intermarriage itself but our rejection of it and our general alienation of most of these mixed married couples thus losing to the community not only the non-Armenian spouses but also our many Armenian sons and daughters married to them" (1983, 116).

The testimonies of respondents in this study suggest that at the private, informal level, the Armenian-American reaction to intermarriage is similar to the Greek-American pattern of the second generation. That is, parents and kin praise defensively the nonethnic in-law, suggesting there are good and bad people in all nationalities, but go on believing that common ethnic background makes a good marriage (Moskos 1989, 94). For example, a fifty-nine-year-old, second-generation woman who is married to a non-Armenian wrote: "My Mom loves my husband very much and tells her friends that if he was Armenian he couldn't treat her any nice [*sic* ]; in other words, they have a good mother-in-law-son-in-law relationship."

Another middle-aged, second-generation woman explained that her son's and daughter's spouses were non-Armenian, adding: "[They] love our culture and customs and my grandchildren have been baptized in our Armenian Apostolic Church." Second-generation parents find consolation that their children "are happily married," or that their non-Armenian in-laws are "from fine upper-class families." Yet another third-generation woman has this to say about her Irish/German/French fiancé: "His family regards Armenian people very highly and is very receptive to my ethnicity. Hopefully, our children will learn to be proud of ***both*** their backgrounds" (emphasis in original).

As for the children of intermarried couples, one of four choices in their socialization is possible. Parents can either follow the ethnic background of the mother, or that of the father; or a little of both,

producing pan-ethnics; or they may choose to follow neither backgrounds bringing forth nonethnic "Americans." I am unable to discern which is the most common pattern for the acculturation of the children of mixed parentage from the remarks of the New York respondents. The analysis suggests that mixed ancestry is generally less statistically significant than generation and religious affiliation in determining the degree of alienation from the Armenian world. Mixed marriages increase the likelihood of assimilation, but do not necessarily produce it. Here are some examples:

> I don't know if there is any value in mentioning that although my mother is Anglo-Saxon I was raised in an Armenian household (male 55, third-generation).

> Living in a mixed ethnic family, ethnic bonds were not developed in either nationality. However, I am proud to be both Polish and Armenian (male 50, second-generation, mother Polish).

> I married a non-Armenian who is very supportive of my heritage and we were married and baptized our children in the Armenian church and they go to Armenian church with me (female 40, respondent and mother U.S.-born).

> I am married to a non-Armenian but my children would be raised as Armenians (female 24, born in Iran came to the United States at age 16, husband Jewish).

Intermarriage is a fact of life in later generations.[24] The story of a fifty-eight-year-old, second-generation woman personifies some of these issues.

> As an American-Armenian who married an *Odar*, 36 years ago, I am aware that many social/religious/political Armenian-related activities tapered off considerably after my marriage. Though married to an empathetic [sic] 'Pesa' [groom], the situation precludes a totally committed involvement in more Armenian activity. I have two daughters in their early thirties, one married to an Armenian. Their daughter is being raised with a pride in her heritage.

> My second daughter is not married, successful in her career but sad at the odds in finding an Armenian mate to perpetuate her heritage.

> [I regret] ... the discouraging situation for young Armenian singles in this country vis-à-vis their meeting suitable marriage partners for the future.

The degree of accommodation the *odar* spouse needs to make depends on the generational status of the family he/she is marrying into. Those who marry foreign-born Armenians generally have more hurdles to overcome. Often, the most significant is the language gap.

The inability to speak or understand Armenian creates communication barriers that may make the *odar* spouse feel isolated and rejected. The spouse does not have to be a complete *odar;* American-born Armenians who marry foreign-born men and women have similar problems. A case in point is an interview writer Mary Ann Aposhian conducted with Christine, a third-generation wife, and Vahe, a foreign-born husband. Here are Christine's comments:

> I love being with Armenians, but sometimes I feel so lonely. We go to a lot of Armenian events ... the first-generation men want to bond with each other all the time at these events.... They sit in the living room; the women sit in the kitchen. I can't speak Armenian, so Vahe has to sit with me all the time because nobody will want to talk to me in English and because, well—truthfully—I'm snubbed to a certain extent.[25]

The New York survey reveals that there is very little linguistic acculturation. Less than 7 percent (N = 11) of *odar* spouses spoke Armenian, and a mere 1.8 percent read/wrote Armenian (see table 3.11).[26] Most of these spouses in question were also born and married in the Middle East. In general, *odar* spouses do their part to find acceptance and accommodation. They readily enjoy Armenian food, some daughters-in-law even learn to cook their husband's favorite dishes. They may be curious to learn about Armenian culture and history in general, and their spouse's ancestors in particular. However, participation in communally hosted events is an onerous obligation. They might sporadically agree to attend a picnic or concert to please their spouses and have peace with their in-laws. I should add that the less one attends community events, the more one is likely to feel isolated and surrounded by unfamiliar faces. This has nothing to do with Armenians. Acquaintances and friendships take time and effort to forge.

Of course, there are exceptional *odar* spouses, mostly of foreign-born Armenians, who have invested great amounts of time and energy in the formally organized community. They have had to be more royalist than the king to gain recognition. Yet, even then, they remain outsiders, literally *odars*. It is therefore not surprising that intermarried couples and their children prefer to shield themselves from feelings of rejection, and thus remain aloof from Armenian-American institutional circles.

*Community Involvement for Symbolic Armenians*

Oscar Handlin speaking at a conference on Armenian assimilation in 1984 observed that in spite of the homogenizing influences of the mass media, there are very few typically American rituals that deal with birth, marriage, and death. Thus, he argued, "ethnicity fills the vacuum," because people want traditions that are unique and more meaningful to them. Handlin explains: "People becoming Americanized are not just moving away from their pasts; they wish to move toward something that will apply to education and the rearing of children, to family life, and even to a search for rituals or ceremonies for their own sake" (1986-87, iv). Similarly, Joshua Fishman (1985, 503 italics in original) recognizes that there are certain *acts* and certain *events*, such as transitions of birth, death, coming of age that are more imbued with ethnic behavior and meaningfulness than others in modern urban life. There are also certain *persons* such as the grandmother, the parish priest who are interacted with in terms of shared ethnic world. As there are *places*, *topics* and *role relationships*

**TABLE 3.11**
**Frequency Distribution of Ability of Spouse to Speak Armenian by Generation Controlled for Spouse's Ethnicity (married sample only)**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent + U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|
| Spouse's ethnicity | | | |
| 2 Parents Armenian | | | |
| N = (313) | (163) | (131) | (19) |
| Doesn't speak Armenian | 3.7 | 9.2 | 21.1 |
| Spouse speaks Armenian | 96.3 | 90.8 | 78.9 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| 1 Parent Armenian | | | |
| N = (10) | (3) | (6) | (1) |
| Doesn't speak Armenian | 33.3 | 33.3 | 0.0 |
| Spouse speaks Armenian | 66.7 | 66.7 | 100.0 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Non-Armenian Background | | | |
| N = (170) | (30) | (96) | (44) |
| Doesn't speak Armenian | 83.3 | 96.9 | 93.2 |
| Spouse speaks Armenian | 16.7 | 3.1 | 6.8 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

that are more likely to be marked off and colored by ethnic rituals, symbolism and connotations.

Armenian identity could indeed be functional in modern American society. Nonetheless, the question one needs to ask is: How prevalent is the desire to be married in an Armenian church or to baptize and raise one's children in the Armenian community? The results of the New York survey do not support the belief that any substantial proportion of people of Armenian descent beyond the second generation aspire to "return" to the Armenian community. On the contrary, the evidence speaks for itself; as shown above, most of the behavioral indicators drop sharply after the second generation. What this study proves, however, is that 'feelings' for one's Armenian background remain strong, and may occasionally be manifested by token behavioral gestures such as getting married in an Armenian church or making donations to Armenian charities or visiting one's Armenian grandmother. Even though I do not want to belittle the significance of such actions to the man or woman of Armenian descent, these are not behavioral patterns rooted in the daily routine and material circumstances of people's lives.

With increasing generations, alienation from the organized Armenian community is common. The remarks of a twenty-eight-year-old man whose paternal grandfather immigrated from Turkey are a case in point: "I have no desire to cling to other Armenians—or to go to every barbecue sponsored by Armenians. I only feel proud by other people's awareness of Armenians and their heritage." Similarly, the experiences of a fifty-nine-year-old, second-generation man are typical of many others.

> I attended Sunday school every Sunday, from my earliest youth through my senior year of high school. This experience was my closest contact with Armenians during my formative years, and except for family visits with Armenian friends and relatives, my only real contact. My day-to-day experiences were in a pleasant, small town environment, with "Americans," where I became totally assimilated into the [local] community.

To justify involvement in Armenian communal life some respondents provided specific instrumental reasons. A twenty-five-year-old man, both of whose parents were U.S.-born, said he had attended one or two Armenian conventions "for previously received scholarships." He went on to explain:

> Although my family and I are not "active" in the so-called Armenian community, I do identify as an Armenian and am quite grateful to the various scholarships I have received over the years to defray the cost of attending the best schools in the nation. Such is a very important role that is played by the AGBU & ASA. In this way an Armenian-American is able to promote the reputation of Armenians while making a positive contribution to this United States.

Once scholarship funds are established, it might not be too difficult to find recipients of Armenian descent.[27] In much the same way, when asked about the future of Armenian organizations, one of my informants replied: "They'll survive, some are well funded organizations. Money means a lot. If there is a yearly income, they'll exist. If there is a staff, there will be projects and programs."

A fifty-nine-year-old, second-generation woman said she attended one dinner dance, adding: "Cotillon—my daughter was an Armenian debutante." Judging by the coverage they receive in the ethnic press, debutante balls have become increasingly popular among the American-born suburbanites in recent years. Cotillons emulate the behavior of the national elite listed in the *Social Register* and photographed in *Town and Country* that they are unlikely to belong to. It is an event that befits the social standing of many *nouveaux riches* Armenian-Americans. It provides a unique occasion for mothers and daughters for ostentatious display and at the same time an opportunity for mate selection among acceptable peers. Most important, these peers are from the same socioeconomic status; being of Armenian descent adds the icing on the cake. Debutante balls have high potential for attracting affluent symbolic Armenians into the community, at least temporarily.[28]

### *Economic Participation*

Several respondents in the New York study remarked that they had not attended requiem services for the Genocide (or some other event) but had sent in a donation, implicitly suggesting that such monetary contributions were proof of their commitment to Armenianness. Given the above-average incomes of this sample, and possibly of many Armenian-Americans, monetary contributions, however large, may not be such a big sacrifice. Armenian leaders I interviewed agreed that "raising money has not been difficult in the Armenian community." One of them mentioned that according to Internal Revenue Service

sources, the Armenian community raised approximately 20 million tax-deductible dollars for charities in 1984. Considering there are about 500,000 people of Armenian descent in the USA,[29] this amounts to an average of $400 per person. The published budget of the Armenian General Benevolent Union for 1988 was $9 million.[30] Vis-à-vis the small size of its population, the Armenian Protestant community in the United States has an impressive budget. For 1985-86, the Armenian Missionary Association of America, had a budget of over one-and-a-half million U.S. dollars.[31]

Philanthropic contributions are an important form of involvement in one's ethnic heritage and community. It makes one feel good about oneself, it is easy to accomplish, and it exemplifies yet another characteristic of symbolic ethnicity. I have called this "in absentia participation" in the Armenian world. It is the most convenient behavioral form of ethnic expression. If the case of Jewish Americans is an indication of what will be happening to the Armenians (Cohen 1983), it is probable that those in later generations and younger cohorts will be less likely to contribute their tax-deductible dollars as generously or as frequently. Besides, Armenian philanthropic associations are less likely to have their names on their mailing lists.

In conclusion, the Armenian-American community and the myriad voluntary associations that constitute it, consist of and cater to first- and second-generation ethnics. Only a small (mean 10 percent) proportion of people of Armenian descent beyond the second generation participate actively in organized communal life. Their participation is most likely to be in activities that are undemanding; that is, they do not require knowledge of the Armenian language or culture. That is why ethnic festivals are the favorite form of communal activity. It is remarkable though that Armenian organizations continue to sponsor a large number of banquets and dinner dances year after year when this type of event has the least base of support in the Armenian-American population.

Armenian organizations primarily serve a very small number of devoted followers whose lives outside the domestic and occupational spheres center around the ethnic community. As a community leader observed: "Every single function that is done, it's probably the same 2000 or so people who attend everything." This informant blamed the Armenian organizations for alienating younger cohorts.

> We need new projects, the ones we have aren't any good. We need things that are interesting to the new generation. The new generation is not interested in stuffing envelopes and selling dinner tickets. We need projects within the professions of those people.

> All Armenian projects so far have been sports oriented or dance or music, but not everyone is interested in such things. Our heritage is a little more than dance and music. We lose a lot of young people (ages 20 to 35). Young people are most interested in their jobs.

> [The organizations are] catering for the people who have nothing better to do than go to dinners and sit though long speeches, I don't resent people who are not involved. It's our fault if that person is not interested enough. We all have different priorities in life.

Indeed, later-generation Armenian-Americans are not interested in attending dinner dances. More creative programming might induce some symbolic Armenians to participate in communal activities; however, since most of the leaders of Armenian organizations are from the first and second generation, I find it unlikely that they will be able to transcend their own needs and preoccupations to cater to a wider public of ethnic descent they have little knowledge of and hardly any contact with. The tendency to continue the present structure and programming is stronger. Once a community is established, it runs "by the principle of psychological inertia, comfortable social immersion, and vested interests" (Gordon 1964, 247).

## Instrumental Motives for Community Participation

It is assumed that conscious, rational processes guide later-generation descendants of Armenian descent in choosing a dentist, a doctor, a lawyer, an accountant, or any other professional. These people are more likely to be referred to a professional on the basis of his or her competence and expertise in a given field of endeavor than particularistic characteristics such as ethnicity, religion, race, gender, or age. By contrast, immigrant generations are believed to seek (competent) ethnic professionals because they are more likely to have trust and confidence in them, and also for easier rapport and communication. To illustrate, here are the comments of a young third-generation respondent.

> As a practicing dentist I find a third of my practice to be Armenian-American. I find my rapport with them to be often easier than with other patients. I find them

easier to trust and I have seen proof that they trust me *beyond the normal expectations of a doctor-patient relationship*. This has been a major joy in my professional career. My Armenian patients are particularly kind to me and I love it!

Relative to the newcomers (e.g. Lebanese-Armenians, Iranian-Armenian etc) they come to me for dentistry as I am Armenian. [Emphasis in original]

### *Professional Services*

Three questions measured use of Armenian professional services and businesses. First, respondents were given a list of four professionals they normally consult (doctor, lawyer, accountant, dentist) and asked to check which ones were of Armenian descent. The second question asked respondents whether they would be willing to employ Armenians in their business, if they had one. Finally, respondents were asked if they would patronize small businesses, such as gas stations, mechanics, grocery stores, dry cleaners, jewelers, watch repairers, among others, solely because they were owned and operated by Armenians.

All three measures were statistically significant by generation. The hypothesis holds that with increasing generational presence in the United States, people of Armenian descent are less likely to consult Armenian professionals (.16*), patronize Armenian small businesses (.18*), and employ fellow Armenians (.15*). Overall, only 11 percent of the sample utilize the services of three or more Armenian professionals, about 26 percent say they would, almost always, patronize Armenian businesses, and about 30 percent would employ Armenians, most of the time. Conversely, the proportions of those who hardly ever support Armenian businesses increase in the opposite direction. The discrepancy in these results can be attributed to the nature of the questions. Often, people say they would or would not do something, but their actual behavior does not necessarily concur with stated attitudes. The hypothetical question on willingness to employ fellow ethnics received the smallest proportion of negative responses. Patronizing Armenian shopkeepers and small enterprises occasionally is not as serious or costly to the individual as finding four competent and conveniently located Armenians for one's professional services.

Foreign-born Armenians are most likely to consult with the maximum number of Armenian professionals; however, there are few generational differences among respondents who utilize the services of

one or two ethnic professionals (on average 40 percent; see table 3.12). This is attributed to the fact that many of these professionals are relatives or close friends, as several respondents penciled in. This is not surprising given the large proportions of professionals in the Armenian population. First-generation respondents are also most likely to patronize Armenian small businesses frequently. The percentages drop by half with each succeeding generation. Only about a quarter of the sample would not patronize an Armenian store just because it was Armenian (see table 3.13). Again, almost 50 percent of foreign-born respondents would be willing to employ, almost always, fellow Armenians in their business, while most of the American-born generations would be willing to do so, sometimes (approximately 5 percent of the sample added that they would employ an Armenian only

**TABLE 3.12**
**Frequency Distribution of Respondents Consulting Armenian Professionals by Generation**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 584 | (219) | (272) | (36) | (41) | (16) |
| None | 38.4 | 49.6 | 75.0 | 53.7 | 62.5 |
| One or two | 43.8 | 42.3 | 22.2 | 41.5 | 37.5 |
| More than three | 17.8 | 8.1 | 2.8 | 4.9 | 0.0 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

**TABLE 3.13**
**Frequency Distribution of Respondents Patronizing Armenian Small Businesses by Generation**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 584 | (219) | (272) | (36) | (41) | (16) |
| Hardly ever | 22.4 | 26.5 | 36.1 | 39.0 | 56.3 |
| Some of the time | 37.0 | 54.4 | 55.6 | 51.2 | 25.0 |
| Almost always | 40.6 | 19.1 | 8.3 | 9.8 | 18.8 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

if he or she were qualified; see table 3.14). As expected, Apostolics, followed closely by Protestant Armenians, were somewhat more likely to support ethnic businesses (table 3.15).

Indeed, employing other Armenians hints of nepotism, and many respondents would have agreed with a twenty-nine-year-old, second-generation man who wrote: "I would not discriminate." Another young man reiterated the question as follows: "Just because they are Armenian? No! Because they're qualified? Yes!" Others observed: "If they were qualified, but wouldn't favor Armenians," or "depends on the business and ability of the person for the job (he or she could be Armenian)." Armenianness for later-generation ethnics is selective, as the remarks of a middle-aged, second-generation man demonstrate: "I look for Armenian names as a source of pride in achievement of our

**TABLE 3.14**
**Frequency Distribution of Willingness to Employ Armenians in One's Business by Generation**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 584 | (219) | (272) | (36) | (41) | (16) |
| Hardly ever | 9.1 | 13.6 | 11.1 | 7.3 | 18.8 |
| Some of the time | 40.6 | 58.5 | 77.8 | 80.5 | 56.3 |
| Almost always | 47.5 | 21.3 | 11.1 | 12.2 | 12.5 |
| If qualified | 2.7 | 6.7 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 12.5 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

**TABLE 3.15**
**Frequency Distribution of Respondents Supporting Armenian Professionals, Willingness to Employ Fellow Ethnics, and Patronizing Armenian Small Businesses "Almost Always" by Religious Affiliation**

| | Apostolic Armenian | Protestant Armenian | Catholic Armenian | Other (Non-Arm.) | No Religion |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 576 | (370) | (56) | (22) | (92) | (36) |
| Support Arm. Prof. | 14.6 | 8.9 | 4.5 | 3.3 | 2.8 |
| Employ Armenians | 33.5 | 32.1 | 31.8 | 16.3 | 16.7 |
| Patronize Arm. store | 30.8 | 26.8 | 13.6 | 15.2 | 5.6 |

people. On the other hand I don't care to do business or make friends just because we are of the same nationality. Some of the Armenians in photo engraving business were as bad as you could find anywhere. Good and bad in all I guess."

Few respondents were candid and did agree that they would favor a fellow Armenian, given all other requirements were met. Such is the case of a twenty-five-year-old, third-generation man who wrote: "Would be hired on an ethnicity/nationality neutral basis—all other things being equal, probably lean toward Armenian."

Another middle-aged, third-generation respondent said: "Yes, given the same skills the preference would always go to the Armenian." "Why not?" was the comment of yet another respondent.

Overall, there is a willingness to help fellow Armenians in business endeavors as a respondent said: "To give them a chance." This is anecdotally called the "Double-Duty Dollar" (Hannerz 1974, 55). However, good will is conditional on qualifications and competence. The products or services must be competitive with the market, the rapport must be positive, and most of all, the business or office must be conveniently located. A foreign-born senior citizen who has lived in the United States most of his life, wrote: "Gladly, [would patronize a store] if their work or service is comparable in quality and price to non-Hyes [non-Armenians]. I prefer to go to Hyes [Armenians] and work with them but it must be on a competitive basis, not because they are Armenian per se." Convenience is an important consideration in identity maintenance; patronizing Armenian small businesses is no exception. The availability of such stores in one's geographic area is a prerequisite. For example, a forty-five-year-old, third-generation man said he did not go to any Armenian professionals "because none are located in our geographical area." Nonetheless, the first generation remains more vocal in supporting fellow Armenians in professions and businesses, and they are more likely to go out of their way to do so.

The ethnic enclave hypothesis postulates that the salience of ethnic solidarity in segmented labor markets helps immigrant minorities achieve socioeconomic success despite their initial disadvantages (see chap. 1). In the past, Armenians clustered in the oriental rug business, the photoengraving business, and the dry cleaning business. They hired fellow Armenians as apprentices if they owned their own business or promoted their recruitment by putting in a good word with

the boss. However, Armenians were unable to control an entrepreneurial niche because of their size and dispersion. The nearest Armenians come to approximate an enclave economy in metropolitan New York and Los Angeles, at the present time, is in the jewelry business. According to one of my informants, Armenians, mostly born in Turkey and the Middle East, make up almost 10 percent of all businesses in the Diamond District on Forty-seventh Street (Manhattan) and control the market in downtown Los Angeles. These Armenian entrepreneurs employ Armenian immigrants in both skilled and semiskilled positions, teach them skills, and provide them with contacts. It is true that the entrepreneurs may reap more benefits from the enclave economy than their employees. Yet, many an immigrant, "off the boat" or plane without work papers has been saved by the opportunity to find potentially skillful employment immediately upon arrival and be sponsored for a "green card." A few have used it as a stepping stone on the path of the American dream.

It is has been suggested that the nature of the work environment is an important consideration in ethnic support and maintenance. According to di Leonardo (1984, 140), the exigencies of various work processes may be so organized that they may enhance ethnicity in some cases, such as that of speciality food stores, but stressing ethnicity in other cases, such as that of bureaucratic firms, may bring no material reward and may even be harmful. Work processes are defined as "social relations engendered and maintained in the course of doing one's job." These can be divided into three categories; "small businesspeople, workers in large firms, and independent professionals" (di Leonardo 1984, 136). The first and last of these categories may have large ethnic clienteles, making them most likely to have broad work-based ethnic networks. Thus, small business owners and independent professionals are more likely to claim membership in the ethnic community. Their work environment enables them to express their ethnic identity at work because they rely on ethnic patronage for their economic prosperity. Shopkeepers, doctors, lawyers, and the like often assume leadership in ethnic voluntary organizations, act as information brokers, displaying posters, selling tickets for community events, and volunteering information to insiders and outsiders about the community, and providing much of the necessary revenues for community activities by advertising or other contributions. Di Leonardo (1984,

156) further argues that the type of ethnic solidarity that is invoked by business owners and independent professionals is in the Durkheimian sense, organic.[32] Publicly, these people appeal to the mechanical solidarity of a broad spectrum of people of ethnic descent, but only privately reveal that ethnicity is good for business.[33]

While I was in Los Angeles recently, a Lebanese-born elderly gentleman told me an anecdote to demonstrate his disdain of some, in his opinion, opportunist Armenians. I find this story a fitting example of what I have attempted to explain above. My host was at a fundraiser for a local Armenian school and he happened to be sitting next to a medical doctor who had donated $3,000 on that particular occasion. When the elderly gentleman enquired as to why the doctor was giving so much money to such an endeavor when none of his three children attended Armenian schools, the doctor replied: "It's good business!" Apparently, the doctor has a large Armenian clientele. These insights help explain at least partially the proportionately higher percentages of business owners and traditional professionals in the sample[34] who are willing, almost always, to employ other Armenians (40.8 percent and 24.8 percent respectively) and patronize other businesses (37.7 percent). Business owners and professionals were also more likely to be active in Armenian voluntary associations.

A cursory look at the advertisements of any Armenian newspaper also suggests that business owners and self-employed professionals such as doctors, dentists, and lawyers are most likely to place ads in the ethnic press. For example, I have analyzed the ads that were placed in the *Armenian International Magazine*. I have chosen this monthly publication because of its novel approach to the Armenian community, its investigative style, its national readership, and the high-quality image (colorful, glossy paper) it projects. It is likely to appeal to symbolic Armenians.

Irrespective of the size of the ad, whether it was in black-and-white or in color, I have counted a total of 173 entries in the first eight issues of *Armenian International Magazine* (vol 1, nos. 1-3; vol 2, nos. 1-5). Naturally, there were few ads in the first three issues (an average of thirteen per month), but they have more than doubled since. I divided the ads into three categories: first, there were people of Armenian descent who were advertising their professional services and business products (which had nothing to do with Armenianness). These

included lawyers, financial consultants, computer specialists, political candidates, architects, jewelers, painters/artists, model builders, travel agents, and owners of hotels in London and Paris. This category made up 48 percent of the total number of ads. Second, there were ads specifically targeted to the Armenian market. These included books, records, video cassettes, prints, and memorabilia (rugs or T-shirt with Armenian alphabet). This category made up 34 percent of the ads. The third category consisted of big companies such as Exxon, Bank Audi, Mercedes Benz, California Raisins. These ads might have been placed by Armenian executives, but such companies do not rely on the Armenian population to show them a profit. In sum, those with instrumental motives, the self-employed professionals and business owners, are most likely to reap economic or political benefits by claiming Armenian identity and increasing their exposure in the community.

### *Armenian Professional Associations*

Several Armenian professional associations were established in the United States in the last decade or so. This type of ethnic association appears to be the formula for the future because it is adaptable to symbolic Armenianness. Such self-help networks allow their members to utilize ethnic ties to further individual achievements. Thus, like business owners and self-employed professionals, here too, the basis of solidarity is organic. Being of the same ethnic background is no longer a sufficient motivation to form an association either for American-born or for foreign-born professionals of Armenian descent. Unlike their grandparents' generation, these people are not interested in compatriotic societies.[35]

A popular association among young professionals of Armenian descent is the Armenian Network of America, Inc., established in 1983 with branches in New York, Boston, and Washington, DC. "The Network emphasizes career pursuits and Armenian identity, by creating a network of college youth, young professionals and established career people to promote community leadership and enhance participation of Armenians in the American society" (*Armenian American Almanac* 1990, 27). Computerized information on Armenians in professions and businesses helps the Network in this

task. Meetings for different professions are held separately, but lectures and other events are open to the public. The popularity of the Armenian Network derives from its ability to combine professional interests with Armenianness among young, mostly single, adults. Though at present the Armenian Network numbers 150 members in the study area,[36] their fund-raising events and social gatherings draw very large crowds where young, later-generation ethnics socialize among peers furthering professional and personal interests.[37]

According to the *Armenian American Almanac* (1990), there are about 24 Armenian professional associations in the United States. For example, the Armenian-American Medical Association, founded in 1971 and based in Belmont, Massachusetts, aims "to develop bonds of friendship among physicians of Armenian parentage by meeting at least twice a year; to assist young Armenian-Americans desiring medical education; to assist newly arriving physicians or those starting practice" (*Armenian American Almanac* 1990, 42).[38] Similarly, the Armenian Engineers and Scientists of America, Inc.[39] founded in 1985 in Glendale (CA) aims "to bring together Armenian engineers and scientists to help Armenians and Armenian organizations by technical means" (*Armenian American Almanac* 1990, 43). The Armenian Artists Association of America, established in 1983 in Watertown (MA) aims to promote artists of Armenian descent. The Armenian-American Medical and Dental Association of Greater Philadelphia was also founded in 1983. Some associations are not specific to one profession; an example is the Armenian Professional Society of Bay Area founded in 1982. Unfortunately, the Almanac does not provide any information on the number of members and the type of programs these associations have.[40] Nonetheless, almost every liberal profession appears to be represented. So far there are associations for lawyers, dentists, medical doctors, nurses, pharmacists, engineers, scientists, behavioral scientists, artists, computer specialists, and broadcasters.

In conclusion, the absolute and relative numbers of people of ethnic descent who are members of Armenian professional associations remain very small. The data indicates that 64 percent of the membership of such associations is foreign-born, and only 10 percent come from later generations (see table 3.1). I suspect that more professionals of Armenian descent might join, if they are approached, because such associations are symbolic in nature; that is, not

because such associations are symbolic in nature; that is, not demanding, and basically utilitarian. The results also confirm the hypothesis that later-generation Armenians and those with nonethnic religious affiliations are less willing to go to a doctor, a lawyer, or a dentist just because he or she is of Armenian descent; they are less likely to buy from a store because the owner is Armenian, and they are less willing to employ an Armenian in their business, especially if he or she is not qualified. Yet, this does not mean a total rejection of Armenianness. Here again, there is additional proof of the study's contention that increasing assimilation in behavioral patterns proceeds hand in hand with changes in the form of ethnicity. Outside the family circle, which will be analyzed in chapter 5, it is in such professional and business contexts that middle-class symbolic Armenian-Americans will be most comfortable in meeting fellow Armenians. Ethnic allegiances are attributes among many others that individuals can use to further their personal, business, and professional goals. Symbolic Armenianness manifests itself selectively when actors perceive a material or nonmaterial gain in their ethnic connections. This means that the organic aspect of ethnic solidarity is replacing the mechanical aspect. Kobrin and Goldscheider concur: "When ethnic membership is described as providing a 'sense of community' it may be that 'community' means not only comradeship, but the greater ability to command resources—clients, jobs, promotions, nominations—a useful property which might very well explain the continued salience of ethnicity" (1978, 242).

## Social Networks of Armenian-Americans

When levels of prejudice and discrimination against a given group are high, social ties are likely to be confined to one's group, increasing the social distance between groups. In other words, the boundary that distinguishes "us" from "them" is likely to be clearly marked, allowing few to cross the line. So far the discussion centered on the formally organized sectors of the Armenian-American community. In this section, the ethnic composition of the personal networks of Armenian-Americans is examined, including prejudice and discrimination; social distance between various subcommunities within the Armenian-American population; social distance with other

ethnic, racial and national groups; the conflict within the community, between Americanized Armenians and newcomers; and friendship ties. It is hypothesized that the longer the generational presence, the less likely will the personal network of an individual of Armenian descent be exclusively Armenian.

*Experience of Prejudice and Discrimination*

Self-reporting of discrimination and prejudice is not the best method for analyzing the level of such practices in a given society. Individuals may underestimate or overly exaggerate actual occurrence. In any case, the level of perceived discrimination and prejudice, or lack or it, influences the degree of assimilation of a group. New York respondents were asked whether they had been discriminated against because they were Armenian. They were given a list of five possible types of discrimination: in getting a job, in being promoted, in joining a club, in admission to a school or college, and in buying or renting an apartment or house. Respondents were also asked: "Do you think there is a great deal of prejudice against Armenian-Americans in this country?" Overall, only 5.3 percent of the sample felt there was prejudice against Armenians, most adding that it was in the past, in the 1930s and 1950s. Between 95 and 98 percent of the sample said there was no discrimination against Armenians in America. The highest discrimination reported was in getting a job (4.5 percent), followed by getting a promotion (3.4 percent), then joining a club (2.2 percent); the least discrimination found was in school admittance and renting or buying a home (1.7 percent).

Second-generation respondents reported the most counts of discrimination, followed by the immigrant generation (see table 3.16). Also, older respondents tended to report discrimination and prejudice more often than younger respondents. These results reflect a cohort effect; older respondents remember specific discriminatory periods in U.S. history. Moreover, because of their marginal situation, living between two social worlds, the immigrant generation and their children's generation are most susceptible to be conscious of discriminatory behavior toward them. Men reported somewhat more discrimination than women (50 to 85 percent compared to 15 to 50 percent for women); this is due to the traditional role of women. In the

past, women were more likely to be sheltered at home, having fewer opportunities to compete in the open market and encounter discriminatory practices.

Generation was not very statistically significant with prejudice (tau c .04 significant at .006 level), though the foreign-born tended to find prejudice twice as often as the American-born (table 3.17). Those born in Turkey, Soviet Bloc countries and the Middle East reported three times as much prejudice as the U.S.-born (10 percent, 9 percent and 8 percent vs. 3 percent respectively). These results are in the expected

**TABLE 3.16**
**Frequency Distribution of Reported Discrimination by Generation (multiple response)**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | Later Generation | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 57 (cases) | (20) | (33) | (4) | |
| Getting a job (26 responses) | 23.1 | 76.9 | 0.0 | 100.0 |
| Getting a promotion (20 responses) | 55.0 | 40.0 | 5.0 | 100.0 |
| Joining a club (13 responses) | 15.4 | 69.2 | 15.4 | 100.0 |
| Getting admitted to school (10 responses) | 10.0 | 80.0 | 10.0 | 100.0 |
| Renting an apartment (10 responses) | 60.0 | 30.0 | 10.0 | 100.0 |

**TABLE 3.17**
**Frequency Distribution of Perceived Prejudice by Generation**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 583 | (218) | (272) | (36) | (41) | (16) |
| No | 90.4 | 95.2 | 95.1 | 95.1 | 100.0 |
| Yes | 8.3 | 4.0 | 2.8 | 2.4 | 0.0 |
| Don't know | 1.4 | 0.7 | 0.0 | 2.4 | 0.0 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

direction. Foreign accents, mannerisms, names, and customs tend to attract attention even if socioeconomic variables are held constant.

Generally, older respondents tended to find the present situation more tolerant of ethnic differences. Several had experienced discrimination in finding jobs, joining social clubs, and the like, prior to the 1960s. For example, an eighty-one-year-old foreign-born woman wrote: "Came to U.S.A. in 1923 when Turkey was changing from an absolute monarchy into a republic. It was not easy for Armenians to be accepted by U.S.A. as an ethnic group as it is today. I would say they were considered as—white niggers—your generation is lucky, that being or belonging to an ethnic group is something to be proud of." A middle-aged, second-generation woman also observed: "I grew up in a non-Armenian community and felt prejudiced against. I feel the Armenians arriving in this country over the last 25 years have had it much better because it is much more acceptable to be of ethnic origin today and many have come with money and education."

A seventy-one-year-old, U.S.-born man said: "In applying for my first teaching job, 50+ years ago, some districts showed discrimination. After being hired for my first job, there were no further problems for new jobs, promotion, etc." A second-generation woman wrote: "I am 47. In my teens there was some social discrimination. Those years are gone—at least from what I observe. Ethnic is in." Another second-generation respondent (male, fifty-eight-years-old) believed he was discriminated against in joining a club adding, "in early 50's." Another respondent (female, fifty-three-years-old, second-generation) thought there was prejudice, though "not today. Yes in the 1930's in small towns." She went on to explain that they had lived in upstate New York, "a WASP community where all three children experienced discrimination in the schools. Most friends were Armenian, Greek, or Jewish. Some discrimination for parents."

Respondents suggested that the discrimination they experienced was not directed at them just because they were Armenian, rather it was a generalized attitude against all foreigners. For example, a retired writer, who immigrated from Turkey at age twelve explained: "Not because I was an Armenian-American, but because I was not a WASP, and visibly somebody of foreign extraction. Nonetheless, I was hired by Fortune Magazine for certain work for which I was qualified." Another foreign-born respondent also observed: "There is prejudice

against *most* ethnics probably not clear against Armenians" (male fifty-five-years-old, born in Iraq came at age twenty-two; emphasis in original).

Many respondents seemed to agree that there was little discrimination because few non-Armenians seemed to know what an Armenian was. Here are their comments:

> I am surrounded by people who do not know who and what an Armenian is. I spend most of my time trying to explain that to them (female 51, born in Lebanon came age 26).
>
> They don't know what an Armenian is (female 57, second generation).
>
> To qualify—Since Armenians don't blow their own horns, we have not been well known for 100 years (male 75, second generation).
>
> They think we are Arabs, they don't know the difference (male 77, second generation).

Being of ethnic stock does not necessarily mean one will experience discriminatory behavior and prejudice. On the contrary, there were a few respondents who seemed to believe that their Armenian heritage had been an advantage to them. A fifty-eight-year-old, second-generation woman explained: "Quite the contrary, it seems to be an asset. Everyone seems to have 'a friend' who is Armenian and likes our food. If anything, it helped me and my children into prestigious places." A third-generation young respondent (female, age twenty) said: "Actually, I think being Armenian helped me with getting a job and admission to college." Another young third-generation woman wrote: "Absolutely the contrary—Armenians are highly regarded." In sum, there is no specific anti-Armenian sentiment in this country at the present time. On the other hand, it can be argued that comparatively few people in mainstream America know much about who and what Armenians are, even after all the media coverage of the earthquake and political turmoil in Armenia.

### *Social Distance*

I have measured social relationships within the various Armenian subcommunities and with other non-Armenian ethnic and religious groups living in the study area. The famous Bogardus scale was used

to measure social distance, that is, respondents were asked to indicate whether the closest relation they have had in each group was a relative (by blood or marriage), a friend, a neighbor, a co-worker, an acquaintance, or whether they had no acquaintance from that group. Six Armenian subcommunities and twelve (non-Armenian) ethnic and religious groups were listed in the questionnaire. Even though this is a crude measure[41] for network connectedness among different ethnic and religious groups living in metropolitan New York and New Jersey, it provides valuable information on social networks of Armenian-Americans.

These measures provide evidence to support the claim that the Armenian-Americans in the metropolitan area are fragmented into subcommunities by place of birth. The later the generational presence, the higher the proportions of respondents who have no acquaintances among any of the Armenian immigrant groups (table 3.18). Overall, within the Armenian subcommunities, most of the respondents had Armenian-American relatives (72 percent) or friends (19 percent). A

**TABLE 3.18**
**Frequency Distribution of Respondents Having "No Acquaintance" among Armenian Subcommunities on Social Distance Scale by Generation (in percent)**

| | Foreign-Born | US.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 426-534 | (151-254) | (198-254) | (28-36) | (36-39) | (13-16) |
| American-Armenians | 2.1 | 1.2 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 6.3 |
| Turkish-Armenians | 15.2 | 34.0 | 30.0 | 51.4 | 53.8 |
| Middle Eastern-Armenians | 6.5 | 24.8 | 17.9 | 32.4 | 23.1 |
| Iranian-Armenians | 27.2 | 45.7 | 36.4 | 63.2 | 31.3 |
| East European-Armenians | 29.8 | 47.5 | 46.4 | 55.6 | 61.5 |
| Soviet-Armenians | 39.3 | 60.0 | 60.6 | 61.5 | 31.5 |

distant second were Middle Eastern-born Armenians (28 percent had relatives and 36 percent friends among them). Turkish-Armenians came third (28 percent relatives and 27 percent friends). By contrast, Iranian-Armenians, Eastern-European-Armenians, and Soviet-Armenians are least known. There are reasons for these factors.

Iranian-Armenians speak an Eastern Armenian dialect unlike the majority of other immigrants. Those who have come to the United States in recent years, especially after the Islamic Revolution, have created their own voluntary associations and tend not to mix freely with other ethnics. Iranian-Armenians who came earlier, like Bulgarian and Romanian-Armenians, are well-integrated into the Armenian community and would probably be considered Armenian-Americans by the New York respondents. Recent arrivals from Soviet Armenia are too few in number in the study area and the respondents' lack of acquaintances among them may be well-justified. Note that Los Angeles is the exception among Armenian communities in the United States because of its higher proportion of immigrants and large number of Soviet Armenians and Iranian-Armenians. The comments of a young, third-generation dentist illustrate some of the stereotypes about the immigrant subcommunities.

> I find that the newcomer Armenians [from Lebanon and Iran] in their dealings with me are more like Middle Easterners than the Armenian-Americans. They can at times be very trying. Very interestingly, the Turkish Armenians seem the most like Armenian-Americans! They are *very easy* people to deal with.

> I believe that the Armenian-Americans and the Middle East Armenians have become two subcultures and strangely enough, the Turkish Armenian immigrants are more akin the Armenian-Americans, perhaps more "European?" Also, the Egyptian-Armenians are very easy to work with, much like the Turkish Armenians. They are very classy people. (Emphasis in original)

Outside the Armenian-American community, respondents in the survey were closest to the following in descending order: Italian-Americans (11 percent have relatives, 53.5 percent friends), American-Jews (9.7 percent have relatives, 52 percent friends), Irish-Americans (11 percent have relatives, 48.6 percent friends), Anglo-Saxons (14.3 percent have relatives, 44.6 percent friends), and Greek-Americans (6 percent relatives, 47 percent friends). They are most likely to meet blacks and Hispanics in the workplace. Friendship choices with Italians and Jews are not surprising because large

proportions of American-Jews and Italian-Americans live in metropolitan New York and New Jersey. Moreover, in terms of their immigration history and socioeconomic characteristics, they are not dissimilar to Armenians. It is noteworthy that Anglo-Saxon spouses are chosen most frequently over other groups, presumably the quick step to social mobility and assimilation in America.

Turks stand out as the least known people (see table 3.19). It is remarkable that over 70 percent of the sample have no Turkish acquaintances. This lack of contact is attributed to Armenian prejudice against Turks. The relatively small number of Turks who live in the study area, and their predominantly immigrant status may be another reason.[42] Foreign-born respondents have more Turkish acquaintances than all the U.S.-born together. This is understandable because a certain proportion of foreign-born respondents are recent immigrants from Turkey. Nonetheless, with increasing generational presence in

**TABLE 3.19**
**Frequency Distribution of Respondents Having "No Acquaintance" among Ethnic and Religious Groups in Metropolitan New York and New Jersey on Social Distance Scale (in descending order from closest to least known) by Generation (in percent)**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 352-526 | (163-185) | (102-250) | (34-36) | (37-39) | (16) |
| Italians | 17.4 | 2.0 | 5.7 | 5.1 | 0.0 |
| Jews | 10.3 | 5.0 | 2.9 | 2.6 | 6.3 |
| Irish | 22.6 | 6.7 | 8.6 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Anglo-Saxon | 26.9 | 11.1 | 8.3 | 7.9 | 6.3 |
| Greeks | 16.1 | 11.4 | 16.7 | 8.1 | 18.8 |
| Poles | 59.1 | 21.7 | 22.9 | 18.9 | 12.5 |
| French | 34.1 | 40.0 | 37.1 | 27.0 | 12.5 |
| Blacks | 37.1 | 25.1 | 17.6 | 7.7 | 12.5 |
| Hispanics | 41.7 | 27.3 | 23.5 | 7.9 | 25.0 |
| Arabs | 48.8 | 55.2 | 55.9 | 40.5 | 37.5 |
| Asians | 61.1 | 44.2 | 26.5 | 35.1 | 25.0 |
| Turks | 66.3 | 79.9 | 73.5 | 59.5 | 37.5 |

the United States, even Armenian animosity toward Turks tends to decrease. Later-generation Armenian-Americans are more likely to have Turkish acquaintances.[43]

Except for the foreign-born generation (notably those from Middle Eastern countries), Arabs are the second least-known ethnic group. This may be explained by American prejudice against Arab and Islamic peoples. Generally, later-generation Armenians tend to be more tolerant of almost all ethnic and religious groups and have at least an acquaintance in most groups. By contrast, the foreign-born generation does not have many acquaintances among minority groups such as Asians, Hispanics, and blacks. It is interesting to note that stereotypes about ethnic groups of non-European origin remain strong among the general U.S. population (college samples). On Bogardus's Ethnic Distance Scale, Armenians ranked twenty-first in 1977 in a list of thirty groups and received a mean score of 2.2. (U.S. whites scored 1.25 at the top of the list and Koreans 2.63 at the bottom). Surprisingly, Armenians have dropped in ranking in the last fifty years. In 1926, they ranked sixteenth and their mean score was 2.06 (at the top were the English with 1.06 and at the bottom the Indians (from India) with 3.91 [see Smith and Dempsey 1983]).

*Conflict between Newcomers and American-born*

The two attitude statements measuring social distance in the study were: "I feel more comfortable with Armenians who were born and raised in the same city/country as me," and "Unlike American-born Armenians, some recent Armenian immigrants are crude and clannish." Almost half of the respondents felt that they would be more comfortable with people who were born and raised in the same place as themselves. About a fourth of the sample also believed that new immigrants are crude and clannish, though a third had no opinion on the matter, mostly those in later generations. It is interesting that 37 percent of the foreign-born agreed that new immigrants were crude and clannish (see tables 3.20, 3.21). This may be because most of the foreign-born respondents have been living in the United States for over fifteen years (see chap. 1) and consider themselves American-Armenians, and thus are disdainful of newcomers. Surely, who is or is not a "newcomer" is an arbitrary label. This sentiment is not unique to

Armenians, most ethnic groups have similarly disowned their "off the boat" compatriots.

German Jews who had arrived in the United States before the Eastern European Jews felt that the latter would imperil their status and be a threat to American Jewish life. German Jews established clubs and erected social barriers to exclude the new immigrants (Kramer and Leventman 1961, 45-49). They even attempted to stop the flow of immigration (Sklare 1975, 264). Failing that, they tried to "Americanize" the newcomers (Rosentraub and Taebel 1980). The social chasm ended when the children of the East European Jews achieved social and economic parity with the earlier settlers (Gordon 1964, 185; see also Moskos 1989 for the Greek-American case). Similarly, when displaced persons from Poland arrived after World

**TABLE 3.20**
**Frequency Distribution of Statement: "I Feel More Comfortable with Armenians Who were Born and Raised in the same City/Country as Me" by Generation**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 584 | (219) | (272) | (36) | (41) | (16) |
| Agree | 58.4 | 41.2 | 44.4 | 36.6 | 18.8 |
| No opinion | 7.8 | 20.6 | 27.8 | 29.3 | 43.8 |
| Disagree | 33.8 | 38.2 | 27.8 | 34.1 | 37.5 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

**TABLE 3.21**
**Frequency Distribution of Statement: "Unlike American-Born Armenians, Some Recent Armenian Immigrants Are Crude and Clannish" by Generation**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 584 | (219) | (272) | (36) | (41) | (16) |
| Agree | 37.4 | 47.8 | 50.0 | 39.0 | 12.5 |
| No opinion | 22.8 | 31.2 | 30.5 | 31.7 | 50.0 |
| Disagree | 39.7 | 21.0 | 19.4 | 29.3 | 37.5 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

War II, hostility erupted. Lopata explains the Polish case, which is not dissimilar to the present situation among American-Armenians:

> The presence of the fresh arrivals seemed to have increased the Americanization of the original Polish residents, showing them how non-Polish they had become ... the new emigration Poles tend to be more conscious of Polish culture and more "proud" of its various aspects. Coming into contact with descendants of Polish peasant immigrants who are frequently ashamed of this background, the new immigrants have tended to increase the interest of Polonia in Polish literary culture. (Lopata 1964, 213)

This conflict between different waves of immigration is attributed to ethnogenesis. "The old immigrants tend to regard the more recent arrivals as foreigners and the more recent immigrants tend to dismiss their predecessors as peasants" (Greeley 1974, 312). It was stated in chapter 1 that the culture of the immigrant or ethnic community in America is a new synthesis between the imported culture and the conditions of life in the host country. The clashes between the newest immigrants and those who arrived before World War II are due to their respective definitions of Armenianness. It has been my contention in this study that the culture of the Armenian diaspora is not a uniform culture. Differences between the various subcommunities are the result of separate ethnogenesis for the Armenian people in various host societies. The social, political, economic conditions of life for Armenians in Beirut were different from those in Istanbul, in Marseille, in Fresno, and Buenos Aires.

The attitude statement on new immigrants being crude and clannish received a large number of comments from the respondents. Some of these were specific criticisms related to the wording of the statement, but others were general observations about "newcomers." The tension between new immigrants and the established ethnics is undeniable. Most of the community leaders I interviewed were concerned about it; and in recent years, several panel discussions have been organized on the subject.

Evidently, foreign-born respondents were more critical of the statement that recent immigrants are crude and clannish. For example, a fifty-four-year-old woman who had come from Iran six years previously, wrote: "The American-born don't want newcomers. They are clannish." Another Iranian-born lady who has been in the United States for fifteen years disagreed with the statement, she added: "Au

contraire, [they] have larger cultural and political horizons." A forty-year-old man who came from Istanbul at age twenty-three said: "So are American-born Armenians." Another middle-aged woman who was born in Aleppo but lived most of her life in America wrote: "Some American-born are crude and clannish." On the other hand, several American-born respondents agreed with the statement. For example, a forty-five-year-old man who like his mother was U.S.-born strongly agreed, adding: "Rude, immoral and dishonest." Another second-generation man penciled in: "and very poor church supporters." A thirty-six-year-old woman whose parents were U.S.-born was equally harsh in her criticism of foreign-born Armenians. She wrote: "When I was younger I used to feel great pride saying I was Armenian because that is how I was brought up. However, the influx of Armenians particularly from Beirut (whom we call 'boatjobs') with their dishonest crude way, arrogant attitudes, and back-stabbing women has left me cold, to say the least."

A middle-aged second-generation man wrote the following comments about the Armenian community in general: "They are too cliquish. I went to the Armenian Festival at the Garden State Arts Center and really did not feel as though I belonged especially as we do not belong to any club or organization. My son is married to an *odar*. When I go to their church I am greeted and welcomed. At an Armenian affair if you are not known you might as well have leprosy." There were several American-born respondents who tried to qualify the statement on immigrants. A third-generation, middle-aged woman said that *crude* "seems rather a harsh word, 'ignorant' might be a better choice." Another second-generation man wrote: "Clannish but not crude—odd combination you chose." An elderly second-generation man noted: "New immigrants are like my parents' kind of people."

One reason for the tension between Americanized Armenians and more recent immigrants is the issue of supporting the Armenian church. Newcomers are blamed for not paying membership dues and not coming to church on a weekly basis. The newcomers find the practice of membership dues strange. They argue that every Armenian should be a church member as his or her birthright, whether or not he or she pays the fixed fees. Donations should be left to personal decisions. The American-born defend their position by saying that it contributes to administrative efficiency.[44] A fifty-two-year-old second-

generation woman wrote: "The American-Armenians place more emphasis on the church whereas the Armenians who come from abroad stress the language more. We must make Armenians realize that—yes, the schools are important but being a good Christian is also vital in a child's life."

As mentioned in the previous chapter, generally, Middle Eastern-born Armenians tend to define their Armenianness in terms of language and culture maintenance, while the American-born find the Apostolic church to be the catalyst of their ethnicity. The competition often includes the issue of who is "more" Armenian. This is often heard among community members, both old and new. For example, a sixty-three-year-old second-generation man said: "we Armenians who are born in the USA are mostly more Armenian than these newcomers."

The priest of a suburban parish church I interviewed was critical of the newcomers, though he himself is foreign-born. He said:

> There is tension between the American-born and the newcomers. The native-born are blamed for not speaking Armenian but they are the pillars of the community. They resent the accusation and find the newcomers take a lot of things for granted.
>
> Few of the new immigrants are interested in the church as such. They come on special occasions such as Christmas, Easter, etc. The American-born attend Divine Liturgy more regularly on Sundays. If it wasn't for them the church doors would remain closed.
>
> Newcomers bring their children to Saturday school but have little concern for the church and its activities. Because of them, we are forced to have two types of classes, their children speak Armenian at home. [The children of the foreign-born are taught reading and writing only, while the children of the native-born are taught reading, writing and conversation.]

Another suburban parish priest observed that due to the influx of foreign-born Armenians, the composition of his congregation had changed: "Originally, this parish was mainly English-speaking. In the last 10-12 years, it has become Armenian-speaking. About 12 years ago the sermons were in English, now in both English and Armenian." The available evidence indicates that the invasion of foreign-born Armenian-speaking parishioners has alienated the charter members. In this particular case, over 60 percent of the dues-paying members were American-born, while most of those who attended church were foreign-born.

A second reason for conflict between the Americanized Armenians and recent immigrants is jealousy over the alleged easy and rapid upward mobility of the latter group. As mentioned in chapter 1, many newcomers defy the old stereotypes of what immigrants should be like in their socioeconomic characteristics. Here are the comments of a sixty-three-year-old man who emigrated from Lebanon with a professional education and capital. In the United States, he invested in real estate in the last twenty years and was successful.

> Financially we are very secure, emotionally we miss our friends and lifestyle. We compensate with new cultural activities [opera, concerts, etc.].
>
> Our non-Armenian friends like us and look for our company.
>
> Our *new* Armenian friends are a puzzle for us. We do not understand them. We feel they resent us, we feel; we came and are enjoying *their* America, they complain without hardship. Because we brought vast capital, European education, European manners, in a few years [we] live in nicest neighborhoods, and they complain we are snobs. To understand this feeling in our new Armenian friends is very hard for us. (Emphasis in original)

An Apostolic priest admitted to me that the tension between the American-born and the foreign-born Armenians was one of the "biggest problems" his church is facing. He went on to explain: "They have different cultural backgrounds, different languages. Economic differences are not important. In fact, most of the newcomers come with money, they establish new businesses, they have personal initiative. In fact, they may be better off than American-born Armenians."

I would like to note that such comparisons are made between foreign-born Armenians and the American-born who remain within the ethnic fold. However, the most successful (financially, professionally, socially, etc.) people of Armenian descent tend to be outside the ethnic community. The observations of a fifty-four-year-old, second-generation man summarize the discussion. "There appears to be a subtle resentment by the American Armenians toward the Middle Eastern Armenians—my guess as to why, is: * clannish * come to U.S. with money * get prosperous with relative ease * chauvinistic with females."

### *Friends*

Friendships are judged according to criteria internal to the relationship. They have been defined as sociable relationships "that an individual enters into purposefully and voluntarily for primarily non-instrumental reasons" (Allan 1979, 2; see also Allan 1989). Friendships are not constructed and maintained haphazardly, but are patterned according to rules of relevance. They are achieved relationships between equals. Enjoyment is the essence of sociable relationships which involve spending time and sharing activities together. Friendships vary by social class, by geographical mobility, by position in the family cycle, and by gender.

Immigrant groups tend to restrict their rules of relevance to people of the same ethnic background because of value and status similarity. In later-generations, with increasing assimilation, sociable relationships are decontextualized; that is, the appropriateness of interaction in multiple settings and contexts is recognized. For example, friends met at work are not confined to the workplace. Furthermore, in later generations, people are less likely to be involved in the community, thus less likely to meet fellow ethnics. It is therefore hypothesized that the foreign-born generation chooses its best friends and acquaintances from within its ethnic circle. With increasing generational status, there is a fanning out of sociable relationships; social class replaces ethnicity as a basis for friendship.

In measuring friendship, the amount of interaction and frequency of contact are imprecise tools because "friend" is a subjective label applied to a relationship that is qualitatively special. For example, one of the respondents (male, age thirty-three, respondent and both parents U.S.-born) criticized the friendship questions with the following comment:

> Relative to Armenian friends I feel the questionnaire does not ask the question properly. I have as many close Armenian friends as non-Armenian friends but the question as asked does not allow a proper explanation of this. My Armenian friends are not seen as frequently now as in the past but they are still close friends whom I have contact with on a monthly rather than weekly basis due to geography or difference in marital status. If the question were rephrased to close friends you see at least monthly or yearly, half of my friends are Armenian. I have a close Armenian friend (one of my best friends) with whom I go to professional events but with whom I never go to any Armenian events (we did once during a particular period of our lives but no longer) because of changes in our mutual lifestyles.

In recent years, Network Theory has developed sophisticated concepts and techniques of data analysis pertinent to this issue. Regretfully, they are beyond the scope of this study. Nonetheless, the simple frequencies of ethnic and nonethnic friends that are available here make it possible to estimate the magnitude and direction of the trend. In fact, in whichever way one tries to measure the relative proportion of Armenian versus non-Armenian friends, the pattern is clear; the further one gets from one's immigrant roots, the less likely it is that one has Armenian friends.

First, respondents were asked to provide background information on their "three best friends." About 52 percent of first friends and 44 percent of second and third friends were of Armenian descent.[45] There is a straight-line decrease with each succeeding generation; the longer the generational presence in the United States, the lower the probability of having a person of Armenian descent as a best friend and the lower the probability of having all three best friends of Armenian background (.24*; see table 3.22). Religious affiliation is as significant as generation in predicting whether one's three best friends are Armenian or not (.24*). Apostolics are most likely to have at least one close Armenian friend, and they are most likely to have all three best friends of Armenian descent (28.4 percent). In sharp contrast, those who have no religion are most likely to have no Armenian friends (72 percent vs 32 percent for Apostolics) closely followed by those with non-Armenian denominations (67 percent). The latter were also least likely to have all three best friends of Armenian descent (1.1

**TABLE 3.22**
**Frequency Distribution of Respondents' Three Best Friends by Generation**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 584 | (219) | (272) | (36) | (41) | (16) |
| None Armenian | 28.3 | 45.6 | 63.9 | 65.9 | 68.8 |
| One Armenian | 15.5 | 21.0 | 13.9 | 14.6 | 31.3 |
| Two Armenian | 20.5 | 17.6 | 16.7 | 9.8 | 0.0 |
| All three Armenian | 35.6 | 15.8 | 5.6 | 9.8 | 0.0 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

percent). Mixed parentage reduces by more than half the percentages of those who have three Armenian best friends (.15*; 23 percent vs 9 percent for all three best friends and 38 percent vs 73 percent for none at all). Similarly, younger respondents were also more likely to have no Armenian friends (63 percent for twenty year olds vs 34 percent for sixty year olds) and least likely to have three best friends (9 percent for 20 year olds vs 28 percent for 60 year olds).

Best friends come from all ethnic and national backgrounds; about thirty-five different groups were mentioned by the respondents. Most

**TABLE 3.23**
**Frequency Distribution of Respondents' Three Best Friends by Religious Affiliation Controlled for Generation**

| | Armenian Church | Roman Catholic | Protestant Denomination | Jewish | Other | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **First generation** | | | | | | |
| Friend one N = 175 | 76.6 | 8.6 | 7.4 | 2.9 | 4.6 | 100.0 |
| Friend two N = 168 | 72.6 | 10.1 | 7.1 | 5.4 | 4.8 | 100.0 |
| Friend three N = 158 | 76.9 | 10.3 | 5.1 | 5.8 | 1.9 | 100.0 |
| **Second generation** | | | | | | |
| Friend one N = 229 | 45.0 | 23.6 | 17.9 | 7.4 | 6.1 | 100.0 |
| Friend two N = 227 | 39.6 | 26.4 | 21.6 | 8.4 | 4.0 | 100.0 |
| Friend three N = 222 | 34.7 | 31.5 | 20.3 | 9.5 | 4.0 | 100.0 |
| **Third generation** | | | | | | |
| Friend one N = 81 | 23.5 | 30.9 | 21.0 | 17.3 | 7.4 | 100.0 |
| Friend two N = 84 | 23.8 | 36.9 | 17.9 | 14.3 | 7.1 | 100.0 |
| Friend three N = 80 | 11.2 | 42.5 | 18.7 | 21.2 | 6.8 | 100.0 |

prominently, Italians average 9.1 percent of "three best friends," Jews average 8.3 percent, "Americans" average 5.9 percent, the Irish 5 percent, Germans 4.1 percent, and the English 2.7 percent. These choices in ethnic background are not surprising because Italians made up 18 percent of the population of metropolitan New York in 1980, the Irish made up 15 percent, the Germans 12 percent, the English 7 percent, and the Jewish population of New York was estimated at 13 percent (Lieberson and Waters 1987). To facilitate the analysis, I categorized friendship choices into Armenian churches (that is, Armenian Protestants, Armenian Catholics and Apostolics), the Roman Catholic church, Protestant denominations, Jewish congregations, and all others, including those who do not profess any religious persuasion.[46]

With each succeeding generation, the percentage of best friends belonging to Armenian churches decreases (table 3.23). While on average 75.3 percent of best friends in the first generation belong to Armenian churches, 39.8 percent of second-generation respondents and 22.8 percent of third- or later-generation respondents do so. The next highest percentage of best friends belonged to the Roman Catholic church. This is due to the high percentages of Italian, Irish, and Polish friends in the survey area. On average, in the first generation, 9.7 percent of best friends were Roman Catholic, 6.5 percent were Protestant and 4.7 percent were Jewish. By the second generation, the number of Roman Catholics and Protestants almost triples (27.2 percent and 19.9 percent respectively) and that of the Jews doubles (8.4 percent). In later generations, the number of Jewish friends doubles, that of the Roman Catholics also increases, but that of Protestants does not change. In other words, with increasing generational presence, ascribed characteristics such as religion and ethnicity become less meaningful than the intrinsic qualities of the relationship in establishing friendships. These results demonstrate that Armenian-Americans are well-integrated in the larger American society and social distance between them and other groups sharing their environment is narrowing considerably; the boundaries are being obliterated.

Second, respondents were asked to indicate the proportion of Armenian friends they had at the time of the survey other than their three best friends. For the foreign-born, not only are their "three best friends" highly likely to be of Armenian descent, but more than half of

their other friends were also likely to be Armenian. This probability diminishes by half with each generation (see table 3.24;.36*). Respondents who profess no religious affiliation and those who have other than Armenian denominations are least likely to have a majority of Armenian friends (8.3 percent, 17.6 percent respectively, compared to 66 percent for Apostolics, 55 percent for Armenian Protestants and 27 percent for Armenian Catholics).

Socioeconomic variables were not significantly related to friendship choices with the exception of education (.16*). The higher the educational attainment, the less the circle of Armenian friends (40 percent for less than high school, 64 percent for high school, 47 percent for less than college, 45 percent for college and 40 percent for more than college). These findings corroborate the conclusions of previous studies; that is, immigrants associate with fellow ethnics, but

**TABLE 3.24**
**Frequency Distribution of Proportion of Armenian Friends Now by Generation**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 574 | (214) | (267) | (36) | (41) | (16) |
| None | 6.5 | 18.4 | 30.6 | 39.0 | 31.3 |
| Less than half | 15.4 | 39.3 | 44.4 | 43.9 | 62.5 |
| More than half | 78.0 | 42.3 | 25.0 | 17.1 | 6.3 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

**TABLE 3.25**
**Frequency Distribution of Armenian Friends When Respondent Was Eighteen Years of Age by Generation**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 584 | (219) | (272) | (36) | (41) | (16) |
| None | 4.1 | 18.4 | 22.2 | 39.0 | 31.3 |
| Less than half | 12.8 | 34.2 | 38.9 | 34.1 | 62.5 |
| More than half | 83.1 | 47.4 | 38.9 | 26.8 | 6.3 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

education and length of residence expands their networks (Breton and Pinard 1960).

Third, generation was also significantly related to the proportion of Armenian friends when respondent was seventeen or eighteen years of age (.35*; table 3.25). The sharpest drop is between the foreign-born generation and the second generation. Later-generation Armenians are more likely to grow up in communities where there are no or few Armenians. For example, a fifty-six-year-old, second-generation woman wrote: "Grew up in Newburgh, NY, not too many Armenians." A young man whose father is Jewish and whose mother's parents were Armenian immigrants from Turkey, remarked: "We lived in a section of New York in which no other Armenians resided—*None at all*" (emphasis in original). Some foreign-born respondents also grew up in environments with relatively few Armenians. Such is the case of a ninety-two-year-old man who was born in Berlin of a German mother and an Armenian father. He came to America when he was forty-five-years-old. When the proportion of Armenian friends at eighteen is compared to Armenian friends now, the former receives slightly higher frequencies in each generation. This suggests that in addition to generation, there is a decline over the life course in having Armenian friends. When households of Armenian descent are geographically isolated from metropolitan centers with heavy concentrations of Armenians, they are more likely to join other religious denominations. It is therefore not surprising that affiliation with non-Armenian denominations reduced significantly the chances of having numerous Armenian friends when young (21 percent vs 70 percent for Apostolics).

**TABLE 3.26**
**Frequency Distribution of Armenian Friends When Respondent Was Eighteen Years of Age by Education**

| | Some High School | Completed High School | Some College | Completed College | More than College |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 563 | (47) | (138) | (109) | (129) | (138) |
| None | 6.2 | 13.0 | 14.7 | 16.3 | 20.9 |
| Less than half | 14.6 | 18.8 | 29.4 | 32.6 | 35.3 |
| More than half | 79.2 | 68.1 | 56.0 | 51.2 | 43.9 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

It is noteworthy that in addition, higher educational attainment was significant with friendship with non-Armenians (table 3.26). People tend to meet and make friends in school or college. Therefore, the longer a person stays in an educational setting the more the chances that he or she will meet and befriend non-Armenians. Given the small proportion of Armenians in the United States, parents and community leaders go to great lengths to bring young Armenian-Americans into contact with each other. Summer camps, sports associations, youth organizations, debutante balls, and Armenian student clubs in major universities are examples of communally designed programs to fight against the odds.

Nelson's observations of third-generation Armenians in Fresno, California, after World War II illustrate the efforts parents make not to decontextualize friendships. They are applicable to many Armenian-American parents today.

> Armenian parents, incidentally, seldom made an issue of preventing their children from associating with *odars* while in school. After graduation from high school, they exerted some pressure for their children to join Armenian organizations, probably to encourage friendships with other Armenians and so prevent the possibility of mixed marriage. (Nelson 1953, 115)

The remarks of a respondent (female, thirty-years-old, respondent and father U.S.-born) suggest that the urging of parents, especially if they are foreign-born, to befriend fellow Armenians is overpowered by structural conditions and the ideology of romantic love. She wrote:

> Since my mother was from the other side—Syria ... [she] ... encouraged us (5 kids) at every opportunity to go to Armenian church dances for the youth and join ACYOA [Armenian Christian Youth Organization of America], etc, of which I attended plenty.
>
> With all this, I made many Armenian friends; I had gone through my share of dating Armenian guys, as did all my sisters.
>
> I never stopped having relationships with my *odar* friends. It made no difference to me whom I would someday fall in love with, whom I would marry. Well, it happened to be a guy who not only is not Armenian, but he has no religious convictions at all.

In conclusion, whichever way friendship choices are measured, whether best friends or acquaintances or youth friends, the proportion of Armenian to non-Armenian friends, decreases with each succeeding

generation, non-Armenian denominational preference, mixed ancestry, youth, and higher educational attainment. Typically, foreign-born respondents are most likely to have an Armenian social network. Such as the ninety-three-year-old female respondent who wrote: "All my friends and relatives are Armenian and close to my age, born in Turkey." There is overwhelming evidence that the personal networks of the respondents, the people they choose to label as "friend," those they feel are their equals tend to be increasingly non-Armenian. Most later-generation Armenian-Americans would agree with the young woman who told me that she had more in common with her Irish-American friends than she did with Armenians coming from Lebanon or elsewhere in the Middle East, even when their socioeconomic backgrounds were comparable.

## Conclusions

In this chapter, the structural relations of Armenian-Americans were demonstrated to increasingly fan outside the confines of the formal and informal community. The pattern established so far in this study also applies here. That is, with the passing of generations in the United States, with nonethnic denominational affiliation or no religious persuasion, with mixed ancestry among younger cohorts, and for those with higher levels of educational attainment, a distancing from Armenian social structures proceeds, slowly for the first and second generations, but at a very fast pace consequently.

The data shows that the Armenian-American community of metropolitan New York and New Jersey is a first- and second-generation phenomenon. The members of voluntary associations and the audience for activities and events hosted by such associations drops off sharply after the second generation. At the core of most collective happenings is a small group of frequent attenders or devotees who are to be contrasted with people who acknowledge their Armenian descent but hardly ever take part in collective manifestations of Armenianness. In between these two extremes are those with varying degrees of participation. Moreover, the Armenian-American community is not a monolithic structure; it is divided into subcommunities by country of origin, by generation, by political ideologies, by religious denominations, by socioeconomic status, by life-style and interest, and so on.

Over two hundred events and activities are sponsored year after year by the numerous voluntary associations that make up the formally organized structure of the Armenian-American community of metropolitan New York and New Jersey. This vitality is due to the large proportion of first- and second-generation Armenian-Americans in the population. Being an immigrant and the child of immigrants, irrespective of social class, heightens one's participation in the ethnic community. It also increases the probability of being a dues-paying member, and somewhat less the chance of attending meetings frequently. Involvement in the ethnic world does not preclude integration into the larger American society. Significant proportions of respondents, including the foreign-born, join non-Armenian voluntary associations, notably professional associations and political parties.

The survey results establish that the integration of Armenian-Americans into the larger "American" society parallels their immersion in the ethnic community for the first and second generation; one is not exclusive of the other. Significant proportions of foreign-born respondents were members of professional associations, charitable organizations, and mainstream political parties. Indicators of social distance and friendship choices used in the study also revealed that with the exception of Turks, respondents felt close to Italians, Jews, the Irish, "Americans," and other ethnic or religious groups who live in the study area. However, with the third and subsequent generations, about nine out of ten persons of Armenian descent confine most of their leisure-time activities to the nonethnic world.

Those who choose to remain within the ethnic fold past the third generation are a numerical minority, but strongly committed to their Armenianness. They are highly likely to assume positions of responsibility in voluntary associations. Thus the real loss across the generations is not so much in the leadership, but in the audience to collective events. Some types of voluntary associations and events are more appropriate for later-generation symbolic ethnics. Ethnic professional associations or business-related networks are examples of structures that further organic solidarity, combining instrumental gains with fellowship with co-ethnics. Festivals, street fairs, and folk dance shows are prototypes of events that are most likely to be popular by symbolic ethnics. It should be noted that the present results do not

support Hansen's third-generation return hypothesis. There is no behavioral "return" to the ethnic world in the third or any other generation. Nor is there any measurable "return" by different stages in the life cycle. The high level of activity and visibility of communally structured programs testifies to the increasing acceptability of "sidestream" ethnicity and the influx of large numbers of new immigrants in the last couple of decades or so.

## Notes

1. The Union of Marash Armenians is a case in point. According to the report of their Student Fund Committee read at the 61st annual convention held in Los Angeles on 31 August 1985, a total of $3,400 was distributed that year. Nine college students, whose ancestors were born in Marash (Turkey), were awarded sums ranging between $300 and $500. The report further emphasized that "the real meaning of UMA scholarships is not their dollar value but in passing to our children two important traditions of Marash, namely, our concern for each other and our love for learning" (John Halajian, "Annual Report of the Student Fund Committee to the 61st UMA Convention," *Kermanig* [Boston] 55, no. 219-20 [January-June 1986]: 27). It should be noted that in this particular issue, four out of the thirty-four pages were in English, the rest in Armenian. This further adds to the evidence that compatriotic societies are characteristic of the immigrant generation.
2. For example, the overwhelming majority of the Gomidas Choir of the Armenian Diocese in New York were born in Turkey and emigrated after World War II. The Gomidas Choir, like other Armenian organizations, is facing the challenge of replacing deceased and older, retiring members.
3. The Knights of Vartan is a national organization established in 1919 with twenty-seven lodges in eighteen states. According to my informant, it is nonpartisan and nondenominational. That is, in recent years, it has encouraged the participation of Armenians from all political parties and religious affiliations. It is a semimilitary organization in its hierarchical structure and emphasis on discipline. In 1991, there were 2,500 male members and 2,000 female members, each paying approximately $50-$60 in dues annually. Of these, 75-80 percent were American-born. The average age of the members was fifty years. Most of its leaders and many of its followers have been individuals highly active in establishing churches in the United States and serving on parish councils. In the past decade, the Knights of Vartan contributed $500,000 toward the Center for Armenian Research and Publication, at the University of Michigan, Dearborn. In 1990, they gave $55,000 in scholarships; and like many other organizations, since the earthquake this fraternity has diverted some of its resources to Armenia. They donated a food-processing machine worth $115,000 to Leninagan. In the New York area, the Knights of Vartan have for the past several years organized (at times in collaboration with other organizations) the Times Square Genocide Commemorative Rally.

4. Asked about the conflict between the American-born and newcomers, one of the community leaders I interviewed had the following comments: "It's difficult but their children will no longer be foreign-born. It's a matter of time. It won't split the community further. There are differences in the foreign-born from different countries. Most organizations absorbed the Lebanese-Armenians because they were used to working in such contexts. The Iranian-Armenians formed their separate organizations. The Soviet-Armenians are not organizationally inclined."
5. For example, in the 1980s, AGBU Central Committee of America hired English-trained actor Krikor Satamian to direct the Ardashad Theatre Group. He produced and acted in a number of Armenian-language plays that toured several communities in the United States and Canada.
6. In the study area, AGBU had 1,488 official members in 1984 (AGBU Central Committee of America, *Annual Report 1984* presented 21 June 1985 at 71st National Convention, Los Angeles, California, p. 36). According to an AGBU director I interviewed, 65 to 70 percent of the New York and New Jersey chapter members are American-born, the rest foreign-born. In 1990, AGBU had 22,000 members worldwide.
7. According to a committee member, the group was organized in 1976; there are about one hundred alumni living in metropolitan New York and New Jersey. Their main activity is an annual dinner dance as a fund-raiser. Recently, they have taken charge of an Armenian Saturday school program in the Armenian Protestant Church of New Jersey (called the Sipan School). This alumni association has a branch in Los Angeles, and their annual dinner dance attracts larger crowds than on the East Coast. Haigazian College Alumni Association, established in 1977 in Glendale, has similar aims and activities and partly shares the same membership.
8. It is interesting to note that Boudjikanian-Keuroghlian (1978) has constructed a similar typology of Armenians in the Lyons district of France. First, there are the old-timers *(le retraité)*, those who came from the old country and have grown old in France. At the other extreme are the assimilated, those of Armenian descent who are lost to the community; I call them the "ex-ethnics" (see chap. 5). Then there is *l'Armenien moyen* (the "average" French-Armenian). They are the majority and would correspond to second-generation American-Armenians. Finally, the author finds a very small number of *militant engagé* (militant ethnics). It should be noted that the study was conducted in the 1970s at the height of Armenian "terrorism." With the French emphasis on political activism among other reasons, many young Armenian activists supported the movement openly. There are many similarities between French patterns of assimilation and American ones; however, there are also important differences. Until recently, France has been a closed, relatively homogeneous society, less welcoming of foreigners; Armenian immigrants faced severe prejudice and discrimination (for a personal account see Verneuil 1985).
9. Again, the Armenians are not unique in their experience. According to Zenner (1985, 121), "efforts at forming an umbrella communal structure" for Jewish groups failed initially at national and regional levels until ideological distinctions became less important.
10. According to one of the organizers of the annual Times Square Genocide Commemoration Rally around April 24, estimates of participants have rarely exceeded 2,000 individuals. In recent history, record crowds gathered for a

solidarity rally for Armenians in the Soviet Union. An estimated 5,000 people of Armenian descent assembled in New York City, on Sunday, 12 March 1988 to march from the United Nations to the Soviet Mission to the UN in support of Armenians in Karabagh who were demanding the reunification of the autonomous region with Armenia SSR (see *Armenian Reporter*, 17 March 1988). The record was broken in 1990. Close to 7,500 people were estimated to have attended the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Genocide at Times Square. I should add that this particular gathering was a joint effort between the two factions of the community; the Prelacy and Diocese groups (see the *Armenian Reporter*, 26 April 1990, p. 24).

11. A small nonprobability study asking people of Armenian descent who they thought were Armenian leaders in the diaspora today found that there were no viable political leaders who could be readily named. Respondents named clerics, a philanthropist, history professors. They also mentioned writers, freedom fighters, and men of arms who have long been dead (Khachig Tölölyan, "Who leads the Armenians of the Diaspora?" *Armenian Reporter*, 31 July 1986, p. 3). Similarly, one of my informants lamented that the Armenian community spends enormous fortunes on communal projects but there is no master plan, no list of priorities, because there is no community-wide leadership.
12. Lopata (1964, 216) makes a similar case for Polish-Americans. She argues that there are no unifying goals sufficiently broad to attract large numbers of Polish-Americans. Poles, like Armenians, blame their inner conflicts on their "Polishness" and individualism. She suggests that the greater the differentiation within the ethnic group, the more their assimilation, the less likely their ability to organize as an interest group.
13. The Armenian population of Greater London is estimated to range between 8,000 and 10,000 persons. Only about 1,500 of them are active members in voluntary associations, participating regularly in communal life (Talai 1984).
14. I was notified by an informant that activities sponsored by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Tashnags) and its allied associations are rarely advertised in the *Armenian Reporter*. The figures presented above are therefore lower than the actual number of events that take place in any given year.
15. *Kef* is a Turkish word meaning "merriment." A *kef* night is an informal gathering for dancing, eating, and drinking.
16. According to one observer there are approximately seventeen amateur Armenian folk dance ensembles in the United States that are somewhat active. See Gary Lind-Sinanian "Armenian Dance in the Diaspora - An Inquiry," *Armenian Reporter*, 19 December 1985, p. 2. From the *Armenian American Almanac* (1990), I was able to count six folk dance ensembles or troupes; three dance studios (in California); and one folk dance society whose purpose is "to preserve and perpetuate Armenian traditional folk dancing and music unchoreographed."
17. These were lectures of general interest, for example, lectures on wills and estates, taxes, computers, business ethics, and interpretation of dreams. Their sponsoring organizations cater mostly to the "Armenian yuppie" generation, American-born young professional symbolic Armenians. Later-generation ethnic organizations such as the Armenian Network, Inc. can draw the biggest crowds for such topics rather than traditional cultural and historical subjects ("Arm. Network Offers Varied Programs to Young Professionals," *Armenian Reporter*, 26 March 1987, p. 4.

18. See Parlakian (1983) for an account of "Armenian-American theatre" in the United States. Parlakian observes that initially, original Armenian plays and world drama in translation were produced for Armenian immigrant audiences. However, by the 1940s and 1950s, a new generation of American-born Armenians, thoroughly familiar with the English language did not need to see Shakespeare and others in translation. Thus, the repertoire of amateur theatrical groups was increasingly restricted to Armenian works. In the 1970s, there was a new surge of theatrical performances in the Armenian community of New York. Parlakian attributes this "cultural renaissance" to the renewed interest in ethnicity nationally, but mostly to the large numbers of immigrants from the Middle East. Nonetheless, audiences for ethnic theater remain limited. Parlakian mentions that at a hit show in 1979, 600 people packed the auditorium (p. 33). Similar figures were quoted to me by community leaders I interviewed. In 1985, about 700 people, mostly foreign-born, attended two performances of an Armenian play in New Jersey. The prevalence of foreign-born audiences in ethnic theater is understandable, when the small proportion of American-born ethnics who speak the Armenian language is taken into consideration.
19. In 1985, there were two major ethnic festivals, the One World Festival in New York City and another one in New Jersey. The One World Festival was a product of the 1970s "ethnic revival" movement; it was co-sponsored by the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America and the Mayor's Office of Special Projects and Events. It brought together, for sixteen consecutive years, a large number of folk dance groups, musicians, and entertainers from around the world, as well as vendors of souvenirs and food. Armenian parishes and organizations were prominent at the festival, but the *piece de resistance* was usually on Sunday afternoons when the Antranig Dance Ensemble performed for the large crowds. The festival was held on the weekend following Labor Day, at St. Vartan's Cathedral on 33 Street and its adjacent St. Vartan Park. The last festival was to be on September 10-11, 1988; and as in previous years, New York's popular mayor, Ed Koch, and numerous other politicians made an appearance (see *Armenian Reporter,* 29 September 1988, p. 8). The community's preoccupation with the earthquake in Armenia and New York City's fiscal crisis finally put an end to the One World Festival. In any case, it was ready to fold. It had served its purpose well while it lasted. After repeating the same program for sixteen years, the audience was ready for something new, and few people were willing to invest time and energy to organize such an undertaking.
20. Golf is becoming increasingly a favorite sport with American-born upper-middle-class suburbanites of Armenian descent. Golf tournaments were not advertised in the ethnic press during 1986; however, they have been mentioned occasionally since.
21. In spite of its name, the Armenian Student Association (ASA) does not depend on students for its membership. The ages of its members range from early adulthood to senior citizens. I attended the June 1985 convention in the suburbs of Boston. There was a *kef* night on the Friday evening, business meetings for the chapters the next day, and various sports tournaments; it culminated in a formal banquet on Saturday evening with dancing. A live band played Armenian tunes; during their long breaks a tape deck blasted American hits. A number of scholarships and awards offered by ASA were announced and presented at the banquet.

22. Undoubtedly, there were requiems in almost all parish churches that were not mentioned in the ethnic press.
23. It should be noted that organizers of April 24 events such as the annual Times Square rally (New York City) make a special effort to provide transportation and other amenities to the "survivors."
24. Armenian communities in America have created several youth associations and programs to encourage young people to build social relationships with Armenian peers. Community leaders hope that such groups will have the latent function of a matrimonial agency. What the Armenian communities have not realized is that too much familiarity with one's peers can be dysfunctional for romantic involvement. They have demystified love. Similar to peer groups that grow up in Israeli Kibbutzim (see Talmon 1964), Armenian youth active in community circles consider their local peers like siblings (O'Grady 1979, 91).
25. See Mary Ann Aposhian. "Clinging to Ethnic Heritage in America: Study Compares Extent of Assimilation between Earlier Generation, New Arrivals." *Armenian International Magazine*, February 1991, pp. 33-36.
26. For comparison, 70 percent of spouses who had one Armenian parent and 93 percent of those who had two parents spoke Armenian.
27. For an estimate of the amount of scholarships offered to people of Armenian descent in America, here are the figures of two major funding organizations. In 1985, AGBU received 180 applications for scholarships. It made 171 loans and 77 grants for a total of $138,325 (personal communication with director, 12 November 1985). According to the *Annual Report of the Armenian Missionary Association of America, Inc.* (AMAA) read at the Sixty-Sixth Annual Meeting, 20 October 1985, in Downey, California, in 1984 "$183,500 was granted and/or loaned to 198 students, of which 21 were theologically oriented. This year [1985] the total amount awarded was $137,500 of which $84,050 were outright grants and $53,450 were interest-free loans" (p. 89). Furthermore, for the 1990-91 academic year, AMAA granted a total of $139,250 to 120 students in outright scholarships and interest-free loans ranging from $500 to $3,500 (*Armenian Reporter*, 9 August 1990, p. 8). It is curious that most scholarships offered by Armenian philanthropies are paid in small increments of $500-$1,000. For example, according to one "Financial Aid Directory for Students of Armenian Descent," out of 46 awards or grants, only three pay up to $3,000; and the AGBU "Excellence" grant pays $5,000 annually (*Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, 6 January 1990, pp. 8-9). All this creates busy work for both the applicants and the granting organizations. With college fees averaging nowadays about $15,000 per annum, it would be more efficient to consolidate these monies into two or three substantial scholarships than keep the present system.
28. Golf tournaments are in the same league as debutante balls. They serve the needs of affluent American-born ethnics. Ethnic organizations that cater to symbolic ethnics are only structurally ethnic. Debutante balls, golf tournaments, bazaars, etc. have little culturally ethnic content.
29. As mentioned in chapter 1, estimates of the Armenian population in the United States fluctuate between 500,000 and 800,000.
30. *Armenian Reporter*, 11 February 1988, p 8.
31. See *Annual Report of AMAA, Inc*, read at 66th Annual Meeting, 20 October 1985, in Downey (CA). It should be noted that large sums of AGBU's and AMAA's budgets are targeted to Armenian schools, scholarships, and other social projects

in the Diaspora (e.g., Cyprus, Lebanon, Syria, etc.).

32. Organic solidarity is the social glue that ties a community through rational interdependence; it is contrasted to mechanical solidarity which nurtures social cohesion on the basis of similarity.
33. McKay and Lewins (1978, 420) similarly propose that ethnic "manipulators," "entrepreneurs," and "brokers" interact frequently in ethnic contexts for economic and political rewards without strong commitments. Examples of ethnic brokers are musicians who play in Armenian bands, academics who specialize in Armenian subjects, Armenian priests, politicians, and executives who work for Armenian organizations.
34. The reader is also reminded that almost 30 percent of this sample is self-employed.
35. In order to attract young, later-generation ethnics into the communal structures, several organizations have started internship programs for college students. The Armenian Assembly and AGBU are two such organizations where college students are placed during the summer months in fields of government, business, and industry of their choice for training and experience. The rationale behind these programs is similar to the professional associations: they further ethnic solidarity among people of Armenian descent by helping each other out and taking care of their own.
36. See *Armenian Reporter*, 17 March 1988, p. 6.
37. The Armenian Network has been very popular in New York/New Jersey (e.g., over 1,000 participants for their Christmas dance). This is due to the vacuum it fills in the institutional structure and most important its latent function. The Network caters to young upwardly mobile professionals of ethnic descent who shrug away from the forms of Armenianness of their parents' generation. One of their leaders boasted to me that they have been able to remove their gatherings from church basements and host their functions in hotels, restaurants, and university clubs. It is an organization by the young for the young, ideally suited for later-generation symbolic Armenians. Though structurally Armenian, much in its content (e.g., lectures) is not. In my opinion their popularity is due to their latent function. Informal meetings, cruises, dances serve as a marriage market for these Armenian "yuppies."
38. See also "Armenian Medical World Conference in LA Brings Together Over 400 Doctors," *Armenian Reporter*, 2 June 1988, p. 14.
39. For example, see advertisement for AESA's symposium in *Armenian International Magazine*, January 1991, pp. 32-33.
40. My knowledge about numbers of members and rate of convention participation is sketchy. For example, according to a recent newspaper report, the Armenian Bar Association has 220 members. It had its first annual meeting in California in January 1990, and about half of the members attended (*Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, 10 February 1990, p. 9). Also, about 30 academics and independent professionals of Armenian descent in social and behavioral sciences, out of a total of approximately 240 (12.5 percent), responded to an invitation and attended the first meeting of the Armenian Behavioral Science Association in New York City in 1987 (See Anny Bakalian, "Association for Behavioral & Social Scientists founded here," *Armenian Reporter*, 10 September 1987, p. 12). The goals of this association are professional networking, social science research on Armenian subjects, training and referrals to students of Armenian descent in the

field, and providing professional services to the Armenian community. ABSA publishes a newsletter and a directory (its 1989 edition lists 304 anthropologists, psychologists, political scientists, sociologists, and social statisticians). It meets regionally, several times a year, in conjunction with the annual meetings of national social science associations. For example, sociologists have met during the annual convention of the American Sociological Association in San Francisco in 1989 and Washington, DC in 1990. At any given time the number of sociologists did not exceed eight. I should add that there are less than a dozen sociologists of Armenian descent in the United States.

41. It does not control for group size, homogeneity of socioeconomic status, time of immigration or ethnic queue (see chap. 1), and respondent's generational and ancestral background. The labels used for the Armenian subcommunities were not readily familiar to the respondents. For example, Eastern-European Armenian was used to economize space, it stood for Bulgarian and Romanian-Armenians. Generally the question was considered difficult and "fussy" by respondents. Consequently, its response rate was far below optimum (missing up to 26 percent).
42. There are an estimated 125,000 Turks living in the United States, few of them in Brooklyn and Queens, New York City (Ghayur 1981).
43. This characteristic is not peculiar to Armenian-Americans. Younger Lebanese-Armenians responding to the "Ethnic Orientation Questionnaire" were more likely than the older generation to disagree with a statement that Armenians and Turks can never be friends (Der-Karabetian and Oshagan 1977).
44. Again, this issue of dues-paying church membership is not unique to Armenians; long ago, Treudley observed the same thing among the Greeks in Boston. She wrote: "local churches early face the problems occasioned by the voluntary financing of religion and learn in time to adopt American methods of raising money" (1949, 48).
45. Overall, 18.3 percent of the sample had one Armenian best friend, 17.6 percent had two, and 21.7 percent had three Armenian best friends. It should be noted that the category "none" which makes up the remaining 42.3 percent of the sample includes those who have no Armenian best friends, those who have no best friends, and those whose best friends have passed away, which is the case with some of the older respondents.
46. The reader is reminded that, 77.7 percent of respondents were affiliated with Armenian churches, 3 percent with the Roman Catholic church, 15.3 with Protestant churches .2 percent were Jewish, and the remaining 6.4 percent either had other or no religion.

# 4

# The Debate over Language

"How can you be an Armenian if you do not speak Armenian? What kind of an Armenian are you?" With such callous remarks, foreign-born Armenians often reproach American-born Armenians. Indeed, these provocative accusations sum up the conflict between two definitions of Armenianness: the traditional and the symbolic. Traditional Armenianness was defined in this study as a status ascribed by accident of birth. It fosters a compulsive type of identity and unconscious behavioral responses. "Being" Armenian can only be sustained in an environment where there are linguistic, religious and other cultural markers that delineate the boundaries between Armenians and *odars*. Symbolic Armenianness was defined as voluntary, rational choice in identity maintenance. It tends to elicit a situational, emotional, personalized response toward one's ancestral heritage. It is not dependent on knowledge or practice of language or culture to survive. Rather, it is contingent on its effectiveness in fulfilling social-psychological functions for the individual and on the larger society's tolerance of ethnic differences.

Because of the recent influx of immigrants, significant proportions of Armenians born and raised in the Middle East and Soviet Union who conceive of their Armenian identity in traditional terms have come face-to-face with American-born Armenians whose Armenianness has evolved over the decades to become symbolic in form and substance. The two groups realize that even though they both claim the same cultural heritage, the way each interprets and enacts that culture at the present time is very different. As I briefly illustrated in the previous chapter, on the one hand, the American-born have been embarrassed to see, once again, people who espouse the Armenianness of their parents' and grandparents' generations. On the other hand, the foreign-born have been appalled by the prospect that their own children may grow up to become estranged from their roots, just as they assume the Americanized Armenians to be.

These clashes over language are symptomatic of a broader struggle for social and political dominance of the Armenian-American community. They are over whose definition of Armenianness should prevail, and who shall be allowed to decide the future course of Armenianness in the United States. After all, the foreign-born assert, language is the depository of culture. Without language, how is it possible to maintain a separate culture? Assimilation, the much dreaded enemy, will be sure to win. These views are effusively portrayed in Alice Baghdasarian's poem: "Mother's Last Word."[1]

Take my message to the world, my child.
To my people, my blood and my bones.
Tell my people how hard it was to save our Language.
Tell my people that our Language has to be alive, as long as we breathe.
Tell them it has to be the language of our heart and mind.
Tell them it has to be not replaced.
Tell them it has to be passed to our next generations.
. . . . . .
Our language has to be alive
Or else, we'll die.

But why do Armenians cherish their language so much? Traditionalists believe the language has played a vital role in shaping the historical destiny of their people. In this regard, the fifth-century monk who fashioned the original thirty-six letters[2] of the alphabet was instrumental in carving a separate existence for the Armenians. His translation of the Bible opened the way to other translations and

new literary works, giving rise to a golden age of knowledge. It established Armenians as part of the civilized world and consolidated their Christian identity. In the words of one observer, there is little wonder that many present-day descendants "respect their unique alphabet almost to the point of reverence: pilgrims worship at the tomb of Mesrob Mashtots, its inventor; women wear it cast in gold as jewelry; privileged tourists view it sculpted in gold, marble and precious stones in the palace of the Armenian Catholicos in Echmiadzin" (Davidian 1986, 54).

The American-born do not deny the historical significance of the language, but accuse the defenders of "language at all costs" of operating in a vacuum; of being dream merchants who are oblivious of reality. They retort that they are proud to have surmounted tremendous constraints during their history in the United States and still have produced an impressive communal presence and a long list of sons and daughters who have achieved recognition in their fields of endeavor without denying their ancestral identity. They cite the numerous churches they have built; the multitude of organizations and activities they have sustained; the vast donations they have made to Armenian causes in this country and the diaspora; and the generations of Armenian-Americans they have nurtured with love of nation and church.

In other words, the proponents of traditional Armenianness argue that fluency in Armenian qualifies a person to be a legitimate member of the Armenian community. That is, Armenian identity is contingent on knowledge of language, hence culture. They advocate restrictionist and isolationist policies for the survival of Armenianness in the United States. The symbolic Armenians contend that under ideal conditions it is of course desirable to retain language use, but not if it is at the cost of their ability to make a comfortable living and achieve mobility in the dominant society. They live to prove that knowledge of language is not a necessary precondition to claiming Armenian identity or commitment to Armenianness. They measure membership in the community by concrete action, voluntary service, that is, donations of one's time, energy, skills, talents, resources, and of course, money. They further suggest that the well-being of the Armenian people and heritage are better served by their business or professional success and prominence in American society. They emphasize integration and the ability to function effectively in the world they live in.

The discourse over language is lively and emotionally charged for a number of reasons. First, it divides the Armenian-American community into opposing factions, each with its own social construction of reality. Second, it negates the contributions of the founding members. Third, it calls into question the principal means of communication of this emergent subculture. It should be noted that by the 1960s, before the arrival of the newcomers in massive numbers, English had become the official language of the community. Organizations communicated with their followers in English, the press published in English, literature was produced in English, even the Apostolic church was almost ready to start conducting its services in English.

Since the 1970s, however, the controversy over language and varying definitions of Armenianness have been played out in meeting after meeting, in the myriad secular and sacred institutions and the voluntary associations. With every decision over which type of project should be sponsored, and where the scarce resources should be allocated, the battle lines are drawn. The question as to whether monies should be used to subsidize Armenian day schools or to erect a monument for the Genocide, concretizes the issue. I should add that the ideological orientations of the foreign-born are not clear-cut. Not all of the foreign-born advocate traditional Armenianness. Moreover, as I mentioned in chapter 2, Apostolics and adherents of Tashnag ideology tend to overemphasize the significance of language.

More than any other subject, the language debate has centered on the role of all-day Armenian schools. As agents of socialization such schools are believed to be the best means of ensuring that the next generation will speak, read, and write Armenian. Maintaining high academic standards seems somewhat of an afterthought. Since 1964, the year the first all-day school was established in Encino (CA), Armenian-Americans have funded twenty-two such institutions. To keep the doors of these schools open requires not only constant financial investment, but also well-trained teachers, textbooks, other educational resources, and of course, pupils. The debate goes on.

Not a year goes by without a panel discussion or a symposium being held on the subject of Armenian day schools in Boston, Los Angeles, New York, or San Francisco.[3] The Armenian press is also replete with articles and letters to the editor expounding the pros and

cons of Armenian education and all-day schools.[4] Paradoxically, most of these exchanges are speculative, ideological diatribes. With a few exceptions, systematic studies on the performance of these schools, first as agents of socialization into the Armenian world, and secondly in preparing their students to function effectively in the postindustrial economy they live in, have yet to be undertaken.

The dilemma is not only at the collective level. Most parents of Armenian descent, at some point or another, need to decide what kind of a person they want their child to grow up to be. Their decisions take into account the material circumstances of their lives, their ideological orientations regarding their Armenian background, and last but not least, their status as American citizens. For the intermarried in later generations, the question of language is often moot, since the majority are unlikely to speak it. In rare cases, such couples may decide to send their child to an all-day Armenian school. For couples and/or individuals who speak Armenian, the following questions are more relevant and pressing: Should they speak Armenian at home? How can they insist that their children speak Armenian? Should they send them to Armenian Saturday school, or Sunday school; and what about camp? What kind of compromises will they be able to live with? For parents who live within commuting distance of an Armenian school additional questions are in store. Should they send their child to an all-day Armenian school? What kind of sacrifices will they have to make: academic, social, financial? Of course, the financial assets of each family may sway the vote one way or the other, but the real issue in attending or not attending an all-day Armenian school remains ideological.

## Language Retention of the New York Sample

In the lore of immigrants who came to its shores, the United States of America symbolizes opportunity. Yet, the American Dream, and the value system that encourages individual success and achievement, were overpowering for many immigrants. It lured them into assimilation; not that they were unwilling partners. The process of integration into American society was rewarded by the promise of a higher standard of living. English proficiency became a prerequisite for success, if not for the immigrant generation, then certainly for their

children. Thus, it is not surprising that ethnic languages, including Armenian, could not compete successfully with the American Dream. This is illustrated by a middle-aged, second-generation respondent who explains his Americanization as follows: "We were raised as Americans. In order to learn English herself, my mother had us speak to her in English once we were in school. We gradually used less and less of Armenian in home."

In the New York study, five measures of language maintenance were used: three behavioral and two attitudinal. Table 4.1 shows the breakdown by generation of the percentage of respondents scoring "high" (ethnic position) on the five language measures: ability to speak, read/write Armenian adequately to very well; frequency Armenian spoken at home almost always; and agreeing (mildly or strongly) with the following statements: "It is not possible to stay Armenian without speaking Armenian" and "Our children should learn to speak Armenian."

Overall, 73.7 percent of the New York respondents speak Armenian adequately to very well, while only 40 percent read or write Armenian. Nearly 30 percent of the sample speak Armenian at home almost always, 23 percent some of the time, and 47.5 percent hardly ever or

**TABLE 4.1**
**Frequencies of Respondents Scoring "High" on Five Language Variables by Generation**
**(in percent)**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 580-584 | (219) | (272) | (36) | (41) | (16) |
| Speak Armenian | 97.6 | 73.9 | 36.1 | 14.6 | 12.5 |
| Read Armenian | 78.1 | 19.1 | 13.8 | 4.9 | 12.5 |
| Armenian at home | 62.5 | 11.8 | 2.7 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Statement 1 | 58.0 | 37.1 | 13.8 | 21.9 | 25.0 |
| Statement 2 | 93.6 | 76.1 | 63.8 | 68.3 | 56.2 |

Statement 1: "It is not possible to stay Armenian without speaking Armenian."
Statement 2: "Our children should learn to speak Armenian."

never. These results are corroborated by a small nonprobability poll of Armenian-Americans in metropolitan New York and New Jersey (N = 486). They found that 33 percent of their sample spoke Armenian predominantly at home, while 65 percent did not (see the *Armenian Reporter* 16 and 23 April 1987).

The majority of those in the sample who speak Armenian were foreign-born. Only 3.2 percent of first-generation respondents did not speak Armenian.[5] The most striking change (a drop of 59 percentage points) is between the immigrant generation and their U.S.-born children in their ability to read and write Armenian. Seventy-eight percent of foreign-born men and women who answered the questionnaire said they read and wrote Armenian adequately to very well,[6] while only 19.1 percent of the second generation said so. It is easier to learn to speak a language as a child than to learn to read and write it. As a fifty-six-year-old second-generation woman wrote: "Both my parents read Armenian. Mother tried to teach me, but as a teenager, I refused to learn. They spoke 'clean' Armenian, as did my sister and I."

The decrease in ability to read/write the ancestral language is followed by an equally precipitous drop (50 percentage points) in its usage at home. While 62.5 percent of the immigrant generation speak Armenian at home most of the time, 12 percent of the second generation do so. Even though some 12 to 14 percent of the third and fourth generation can speak Armenian, hardly any of them use it predominantly at home (only 2.7 percent of respondents with one U.S.-born parent do, none beyond that). This indicates that the Armenian language ceases to be the "mother tongue" for American-born generations. That is, Armenian no longer serves as a means of communication; it is no longer an automatic, subconscious response. Words and phrases have to be thought of and formulated carefully.

Generation is the most significant variable with all five measures of language retention; the longer the generational presence, the lower the proportion of people of Armenian descent who can speak Armenian (.52*), read or write Armenian (.49*), and consequently the lower the frequency they speak Armenian at home (.50*). The later the generation, the less respondents believed that one must speak Armenian to be an Armenian (.22*), and the lower the proportions who wished that their children would speak Armenian (.15*). The

relatively high proportions of Armenian-Americans in the sample who speak Armenian, at least adequately, is caused by the recency of Armenian settlements in the United States and the massive influx of newcomers. The reader is reminded that about 40 percent of this sample were foreign-born and almost two-thirds of them arrived after World War II. In other words, about 90 percent of respondents born in Turkey, the Middle East, and Soviet Bloc countries speak Armenian very well, compared to 34 percent of the American-born. In sum, living in America is clearly not conducive to Armenian proficiency.

For the second generation, as several participants in the survey said, Armenian was learned by rote from their foreign-born parents. In some cases, the children of the immigrants did not speak English until they went to school.[7] A second-generation male respondent wrote: "I was born in 1933, my parents only spoke Armenian. I was 5 years old before I learned to speak English." Likewise, a forty-year-old third-generation man remarked that his American-born mother "did not speak English until she entered public school." For those in later generations, the role of Armenian teacher is relegated to the grandparents. A second-generation, sixty-five-year-old female respondent said: "When I married, my parents lived with me and this encouraged my children to learn and speak Armenian fluently." Now that this respondent's son and daughter have grown up and married (non-Armenians), and have children of their own, she added: "At every opportunity, we try to teach our grandchildren the Armenian language. Hopefully, they will always remember their Armenian heritage."

The variance in responses to the two attitude statements is small by all independent variables. Most people disagreed that one must speak Armenian in order to be an Armenian (54.5 percent disagreed, 42 percent agreed, and 3.3 percent had no opinion), but they agreed that children should learn to speak Armenian (81 percent agreed, 10.2 percent disagreed, and 8.6 percent had no opinion). Agreeing on both statements was the ethnic position. The differences in the responses are related to the issues each item raises. Armenians born in countries where ethnicity is an ascribed status were most likely to advocate that language was a fundamental component of culture. Of those who agreed, 56 percent were born in Turkey, 60 percent in other Middle Eastern countries and 54 percent in the Soviet Bloc. Moreover,

American-born survey respondents would have created cognitive dissonance had they agreed with the first statement since most did not speak Armenian. The second statement, on a child having to speak Armenian is less threatening, an idealized state of affairs that would be hard to disagree with.

Several respondents commented to this effect. An elderly second-generation man said it was not necessary to speak Armenian to be Armenian because "it's in the blood," but that it would be nice to teach children because "it enriches them, and [gives them] sense of roots." Others said: "It would be nice but not necessary to be an Armenian," or "It would be nice if possible." A caveat should be added here. There is a wide gap in what people say they will do and what they actually do. Actual behavior invariably falls short of good intentions. This gap is clear in the responses. Nonetheless, these results bear out my earlier contention on significance of language for ethnic maintenance.

Empirical evidence shows that children with two foreign-born parents are most likely to learn their parents' non-English language; those with one foreign-born parent are less likely, and those with two native-born parents are least likely. "The disappearance versus persistence of non-English languages in the United States is largely an outcome of two processes: the passing of generations, and patterns of

**TABLE 4.2**
**Frequencies of Respondents Scoring "High" on Five Language Variables by Ancestry**
**(in percent)**

| | Both Parents Armenian | One Parent Armenian |
|---|---|---|
| N = 580-584 | (518) | (66) |
| Speak Armenian | 79.7 | 31.8 |
| Read Armenian | 42.3 | 19.7 |
| Armenian at home | 31.8 | 9.1 |
| Statement 1 | 43.7 | 30.7 |
| Statement 2 | 83.4 | 63.6 |

Statement 1: "It is not possible to stay Armenian without speaking Armenian."
Statement 2: "Our children should learn to speak Armenian."

intra- and intergroup relations" (Stevens 1985, 82). These findings are also applicable to the Armenian case.

Mixed parentage decreases the odds of a child's likelihood of speaking Armenian. While 97.7 percent of the sample with Armenian mothers and fathers spoke Armenian adequately to very well, 31.8 percent of those who had a non-Armenian parent did so (see table 4.2). Understandably, the most noticeable difference is the decrease in the frequency that Armenian is spoken in the home for respondents with mixed parentage. Several respondents made comments to this effect. For example, a fifty-three-year-old U.S.-born respondent whose mother is Italian wrote: "I do not speak it. We live in this country. I also did not let my children learn German, my wife's origin. I want them to learn English." A thirty-year-old respondent (who like her father is U.S.-born) noted: "My home now is with [my] husband. He is not Armenian. When at Mom's home [we speak Armenian some of the time]."

Does socioeconomic achievement decrease language retention among Armenian-Americans? Overall, there is a steady decline in measures of language maintenance with increasing education, but the differences are not very sharp, nor uniform (see table 4.3). This could be explained by the large number of bilingual, college-educated,

**TABLE 4.3**
**Frequencies of Respondents Scoring "High" on Five Language Variables by Ancestry**
**(in percent)**

| | Some High School | Completed High School | Some College | Completed College | More than College |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 560-563 | (48) | (138) | (109) | (129) | (139) |
| Speak Armenian | 87.7 | 82.6 | 72.5 | 66.6 | 66.9 |
| Read Armenian | 62.5 | 44.2 | 29.3 | 39.5 | 30.2 |
| Armenian at home | 55.3 | 33.6 | 22.2 | 27.1 | 18.7 |
| Statement 1 | 55.3 | 50.7 | 40.4 | 38.3 | 33.8 |
| Statement 2 | 91.5 | 86.2 | 83.3 | 77.5 | 72.5 |

Statement 1: "It is not possible to stay Armenian without speaking Armenian."
Statement 2: "Our children should learn to speak Armenian."

recent immigrants. Occupation is not correlated with language maintenance, but interestingly, income levels were statistically significant with the frequency of Armenian spoken at home (.18*). Though the negative association was not monotonic; 16 percent of those earning $100,000 or more per annum spoke Armenian at home most of the time compared to 42 percent of those making less than $20,000 a year. Nonetheless, generation is a better predictor of language assimilation than socioeconomic variables.

Participants in the New York survey were invited to share their experiences of growing up Armenian in the United States. Their comments exemplify the pressures immigrants have had to face. A fifty-five-year-old, second-generation man wrote:

> Here in America, my other brother, born here, spoke with an accent in kindergarten owing to the Armenian spoken at home. A teacher warned my mother that Armenian must not be spoken at home (this was in the 1930's). As a result, my parents decided to speak only English in front of us. We did not learn Armenian.

Respondents in this study suggest that the 1930s and 1940s were harsh times for immigrants because the Depression curtailed economic opportunities, and immigrants had to comply to the dictates of the dominant group. The present-day immigrants are luckier. Their arrival coincided with the so-called ethnic revival movement, which induced a more tolerant atmosphere in the society at large; in addition, the economic conditions were generally more favorable.

The following quotation from a thirty-year-old woman exemplifies some of the factors that influence language retention.

> Since my mother was from the other side—Syria—we were raised speaking Armenian in the house, as well as English. She sent us to Saturday school—religion and also to school to learn about Armenian history and culture. Of course, I learned the language at Sat. School although I already knew the practical speaking of it. Also I attended Camp Nubar—Armenian Camp—for *nine* consecutive years. We participated in language, dance and culture classes. (Emphasis in original)

In other words, the larger American society does not discourage bilingualism, but it does not make it easy for the children and grandchildren of immigrants to learn their ancestral language. Bilingualism is costly. The maintenance of the Armenian language, like that of other ethnic languages, is dependent on the financial and

other material and nonmaterial resources of the community, and most important, the willingness of parents to send their children to special Armenian schools and extracurricular activities.

The development of an Armenian ghetto in Los Angeles may be the exception to a well-established historical pattern. Bilingualism can also be a dangerous thing. Confining one's entire social world to the boundaries of this ghetto may turn the newest immigrants into marginal citizens and prevent them from achieving the American Dream. Observers of the Armenian-American community are worried. For example, in a recent editorial, Vasken Oskanian of *Armenian International Magazine* made the following remarks:

> Today, in Los Angeles—the city with the largest concentration of Armenians in the Diaspora—we have created an Armenian microcosm, where the community is self-sufficient in every conceivable aspect of everyday life. Linguistically, one can live here for a hundred years and not need to spell a word in English. Indeed, we have created a bilingual America for ourselves, where even some government transactions could be conducted in Armenian. Isn't that fantastic? No....
>
> There is nothing better than to speak both Armenian and English. But also, there is nothing more dangerous than to feel secure and fulfilled by speaking only Armenian, with total disregard and ignorance of the language to which is bound the promise of making it in America....
>
> For us, in order to operate in the mainstream of American society, we must extend ourselves beyond the confines of our narrow environment. We must achieve proficiency in linguistic skills, and adapt ourselves to the behavioral values of American life. (July 1991, p. 5)

The fact remains that English proficiency is a necessary condition if one is to function fully in American society. This does not mean that a person cannot be equally proficient in two or more languages, but the chances of this occurrence in the general population are small because the cultural policies of the United States have not supported bilingualism or multilingualism. In a comparative study of the latest cohort of foreign-born Armenians with third-generation Armenian-Americans, that is, the grandchildren of the first cohort of Armenian immigrants to the United States, Aposhian found that the former tended to be multilingual, while the latter tended to be monolingual.[8]

Aposhian's nonrandom sample consisted of sixty-eight informants; seventeen men and seventeen women in each generation, their ages ranging from thirty to fifty-one. When asked: "What language do you

speak?" Sixty-one percent of the foreign-born said they spoke English, Armenian, and another language equally well; 13 percent were proficient in English and Armenian, only 3 percent spoke only English and 23 percent spoke mostly Armenian and some English. These figures are in contrast to the third generation, half of whom spoke only English, and the other half mostly English. When asked: "What language do you prefer?" Again, 64 percent of the third generation said English only, 32 percent mostly English, and only 3 percent were bilingual. Of the foreign-born, 13 percent preferred only Armenian, 32 percent mostly Armenian, 10 percent mostly English, and 45 percent were bilingual.

What prevents, then, the development of bilingualism in the United States? Should English proficiency have to be the demise of the ethnic language? Though bilingualism is part of the process of assimilation, it is only a transitory stage. Except for the very old, the vast majority of Armenian immigrants learn to speak English within a few years of their arrival.[9] Many may not be able to get rid of their accents, but this does not prevent them from functioning effectively in the larger society. Most of the second generation learn to speak Armenian in early childhood at home, but are not likely to master it. At school, however, they learn to possess English as a "mother tongue."

The chances for the third generation to speak, let alone to read and write, Armenian are slim. Other studies on Armenians in the United States corroborate these conclusions (LaPiere 1930; Nelson 1953; Kernaklian 1967; O'Grady 1979, 109). Writing about Fresno, LaPiere found that in the 1920s, "most of the second-generation cannot speak the Armenian language well and almost none of them can read it" (1930, 304). In the United States, the historical decision to use English as the official language and the success of the public school system in teaching immigrant children to adopt English as their only language was instrumental in nation formation. In the opinion of one expert in bilingual education, "the concept of bilingual education is contrary to the American experience of 200 years" (Cafferty 1982, 117).

In her comparative study of Armenians in Cyprus and London, Susan Pattie (1990) concurs that it is not unusual for Middle Eastern Armenians to be multilingual. However, "it does not seem natural in London to be multilingual" (Pattie 1990, 279). Learning several languages comes naturally to Armenians who grow up in the Middle

East. They manage to compartmentalize the various languages they can communicate with. For example, Armenian is private, it is the speech of intimacy, of informal social ties with family and close friends. For older cohorts, especially men, Turkish is used for joking, story telling, proverbs and curses (Pattie 1990, 256). Greek (in Cyprus) or Arabic (in Lebanon/Syria) is the language of the marketplace, of buying and selling, of haggling over prices. English and/or French are the languages of elite status, of higher education, of one's professional training.

It should be noted, however, that this compartmentalization is not strict. If one were to follow every word and every nuance in the informal conversations of multilingual Armenians, one would need a good knowledge of all the languages used. As Pattie so accurately observes, "when you hear pure Armenian speech, you can be sure that the person has made a mental note at some time, if not just then, to purify his or her speech and discover the Armenian equivalents of the more commonly used foreign phrases" (1990, 277-78). She further argues that multilingualism, not the Armenian language per se, is the key in understanding the thinking of Middle Eastern Armenians. Any single language does not frame one's worldview, but the multiple code-switching and language styles have a significant influence over the perceptions and thought formation processes of multilingual users.

I must add here that the Armenian language itself is divided into *krapar* (classical Armenian, literally meaning "written"), which remains the language of the Divine Liturgy in the Apostolic church, and the *ashkharapar* (the vernacular). Furthermore, eastern and western dialects subdivide the latter. According to linguist Davidian, "dialectical differences include phonological, grammatical (including conjugation and declension) and idiomatic variances" (1986, 57). All this makes it difficult for eastern and western Armenians to understand each other readily or follow the church services. It also compounds the problems of educators when deciding which dialect should be used in instructing the next generation. Several Los Angeles schools have to cater to Iranian and Soviet Armenian parents who insist on teaching their children the western dialect and to others who insist on the eastern dialect.

The United States of America, like England, is a monolingual society; that is, the media, the educational system, the government use

the English language. In these societies, Pattie goes on to say, "speaking languages other than English, even on the simplest level, requires effort, determination, and a different attitude towards language than that of the host culture. This is not easy to instill in the younger generation" (1990, 280). For example, children of Armenian descent growing up in England or the United States, "want to blend in, to be the same as their friends (or would be friends).... Looking different is bad enough, but it is crucial to sound like the others in the neighborhood, in accent, vocabulary, and style" (Pattie 1990, 280). Why do people learn so many languages? For the same functional reasons that people learn only one language, that is for pragmatic and sociopolitical factors dictated by the host society. Indeed, learning English, French, Greek, or Arabic is a necessity for Armenians in the Middle East today. In this regard, Armenian is more of a luxury because it fulfils a sentimental need.

For the American-born, after the second-generation, learning Armenian is like learning a foreign language, but certainly a less popular choice for pragmatic reasons. A twenty-five-year-old, third-generation man wrote: "I'm not so much concerned with assimilation (and actually encourage it) but do *regret* not having been trained to speak/read/write Armenian fluently. Oddly enough I studied Spanish for 16 years and am fluent" (Emphasis in original). In general, prestige more than power determines the direction of acculturation and the language of communication when two linguistic groups come into contact as a result of conquest or immigration. For example, when the Roman Empire was invaded by 'barbaric' tribes, Roman ways and Latin continued. Immigrants to the United States have had to learn English, the language of the ruling elite, though interestingly without the imposition of the federal government. According to Zenner, English proficiency was accomplished successfully with "the zeal of English-speaking Americans at every level of society" (1985, 122). In the American case, power coincided with prestige, reinforcing the dominance of English over native Indian and other European languages.

By contrast, Armenians who settled in Lebanon after the Genocide opted for Western languages, especially French and English, before they spoke Arabic. The prestige of Arabic and the power of the Lebanese government was more disputable. As a multilingual culture,

Lebanon allowed Armenians to use their ancestral language in the privacy of their homes and communities. However, those who wanted to achieve parity with the local elite sent their children to non-Armenian schools. The diaspora Armenians did not have the power or the prestige to impose their language on others.[10] Few odars bothered to learn it.[11] Similarly in Soviet Armenia, the language of the powerful dominated in the public sphere; proficiency in Russian was a vehicle for upward mobility in the Communist system. But Armenian continued to be spoken in the privacy of the home and in the streets. This gave the *Hayastantzi* (Soviet Armenians) a measure of independence and autonomy (Samuelian 1986). The situation has changed since the declaration of independence. Now Armenian is the state language, and all schools are mandated to teach it.

In the second generation and beyond, for the relatively few who can speak Armenian, it is relegated to sporadic episodes such as its use in church, with grandparents, or exchanging "secrets" in public as a code system. Even those who do not speak the ancestral language tend to learn a dozen or so key words and idioms which they use to punctuate their English speech. A young Armenian-American who has explored Americanized Armenian speech, explains;

> if an Armenian is referring to someone who is of black or Jewish heritage, respectively, during an English conversation he would replace these words with *sev* or *her/yah*. Although discretion may dictate this in a public setting, these words have become automatic referents even in private settings, essentially erasing the need for English equivalents. This standard becomes even more absolute when referring to any non-Armenian, or *odar*. Indeed, *odar* is probably the one word of reference from which Armenians hardly ever stray.[12]

Other Armenian words that replace English equivalents have to do with family [*hireeg* (father), *medzmama* (grandmother)]; the nation [*hay em* (I'm Armenian)]; salutations [*parev* (hello), *eench bess es?* (how are you)]; swear words [*esh* (donkey), *khent* [crazy)]; and of course food. Words like pilav, lavash, baklava, shish kebab have entered the culinary dictionaries of America and do not need any translation.

Likewise, the Armenian alphabet takes on a symbolic value. A suburban parish priest I interviewed told me that less than 10 percent of the contents of the monthly parish bulletin (circulation 950) were in the Armenian language, adding: "The Armenian is mainly for

emotional reasons. Few read Armenian." Key rings with letters of the Armenian alphabet, T-shirts with Coca Cola written in Armenian, gold chokers with one's name in Armenian letters, cross-stitch samplers with the thirty-eight letters of the alphabet, wall rugs depicting a *Khatchkar* (cross)[13] are other examples of the popular, albeit secondary, uses of the Armenian language. Indeed, the examples abound; one has only to visit an Armenian bookstore in a church basement or open the pages of Armenian newspapers and magazines[14] to get a deluge of such symbolic uses of language.

For Armenians who live in the diaspora, language is more than a means of communication. It is a link to the larger Armenian family, a cohesive symbol of identity. Even though fewer and fewer American-born Armenians speak Armenian,[15] language remains strong in the definition of their identity. In her study of the Washington, DC community, O'Grady writes that Armenians traveling overseas or in the United States communicate easily because of the shared language. "American Armenians often introduce themselves saying, 'Hay es? Yes Hay yem,' (Are you Armenian? I'm Armenian), speaking Armenian for a brief period and then lapsing into English" (1979, 108). Similarly, a sixty-six-year-old, second-generation respondent said: "Today, I regret not sending my children to a school at least to learn Armenian. It's great to have this learning when you travel. The more the languages the better." Relatively few Armenian-Americans come into contact with other Armenians of the diaspora when they travel. Men and women active in major Armenian organizations are more likely to do so. It was the case of a community leader I interviewed, who felt the need to learn Armenian as an adult, and was taking lessons (interviewee is U.S.-born of foreign-born parents). I quote: "In this country it [the language] is of no use. You don't have to speak Armenian to maintain a culture. But on the other hand, we've been very backward. We should develop better tools for those who want to learn the language—use modern audio techniques, cassettes, etc."

In sum, maintaining full use of the Armenian language serves three functions for ethnicity: first, it is a unifying force, fostering a sense of we-ness; second, it is a boundary marker distinguishing insiders from outsiders; third, it delays assimilation. I would argue further than even in its limited symbolic capacity, a few words of Armenian, here and there, displays of Armenian alphabet on one's person, living room

wall, or office desk testify that language is an identity marker, it sends out signals that only insiders can readily decipher. Like the sharing of secrets, language bonds its users.

The dilemma between the American Dream, on the one hand, and Armenian preservation, on the other, is real but rigged against the latter. Many immigrants and their children find that American society does not encourage bilingualism. Even with an ideology of Armenian maintenance and competent institutional alternatives it becomes practically impossible to retain Armenian language for the majority of the population beyond the second generation, especially for those who live outside the major metropolitan centers with high Armenian density. The comments of a seventy-one-year-old second-generation woman illustrate this, though she speaks with the wisdom of hindsight.

> In my early childhood, I felt like a misfit growing up in mid-Manhattan in a predominantly Anglo-Saxon area—no one knew what an Armenian was. My grandmother ruled as the grand matriarch in the household and would not allow us to speak English at home. Her favorite words, "You were born Armenian, live as an Armenian and die as an Armenian." Consequently, I speak the language fluently, but deficient in English (at that time).

> I did not want my sons to grow up feeling as I did but of course today with all the explosions everyone has heard of Armenians—I should have taught them the language and regret I did not. I realize too late that they would not feel as I did in childhood as I could have helped them in English as well since I am not foreign-born as my parents were. Now at this late date I am trying to give them some conversational lessons in Armenian.

Only in exceptional cases do third- and fourth-generation descendants speak, read, and write Armenian. The data clearly indicate that the Armenian language is least likely to survive with the passing of generations in the United States. Yet, in the opinion of the majority of the New York respondents, this does not make them less Armenian.

## Armenian Educational Institutions in the United States

Armenian parents, in particular those beyond the second generation, are unable to transmit the Armenian culture to the next generation on their own. This task requires "specialists." The perpetuation of a cultural heritage necessitates a conscious ideological socialization, such as full-time and part-time schools. Here New York respondents'

attitudes toward Armenian educational institutions are examined. Specifically, the focus is on at day schools, Saturday schools, or supplemental types of schooling and summer camps. Parental attitudes are interpreted as outcomes of assimilation and varying expressions of Armenianness. It was not the goal of the New York survey to evaluate the performance of Armenian institutions or their effectiveness in transmitting identity and culture to the next generation; however, I will report the findings of two case studies on the subject. I will conclude this section with a brief discussion of the functions of Armenian higher education and research centers.

*The New York Sample's Attitudes toward Armenian Schooling*

It is hypothesized that recent immigrants and the more ethnically oriented will value Armenian education and send their children to all-day schools in the hope of perpetuating their cultural heritage and rooting their social structure in Armenian circles. On the other hand, later-generation respondents will more likely value "American" public (or mainstream private) schooling for their children. When convenient, that is, if time and energy restraints are easily surmountable, and if there are no conflicting personal goals, some may opt for supplementary Armenian socialization such as Saturday or Sunday schools and summer camps.

At present there are a total of twenty-two all-day Armenian schools in the United States (see table 4.4). The majority of these are in the Greater Los Angeles area, including the five high schools. Their total enrollment does not exceed 5,500 students. Armenian day schools are regular schools that in addition to a basic curriculum of general studies teach Armenian language, history, literature, religion, and culture. They are not bilingual institutions because students are taught all subject matter in English except for Armenian classes. For example, in the 1980s, in the Ferrahian High School in Los Angeles, Armenian classes totalled ten periods per week (Davidian 1986, 67, 182); and in the Armenian Sisters' Academy in Philadelphia, they constituted five out of a total of thirty-eight periods of weekly instruction (Ordjanian 1991, 126). Paradoxically, many public schools in Los Angles offer bilingual education at present because of the influx of newcomers from Soviet Armenia and elsewhere with limited English proficiency.[16]

Part-time or supplemental Armenian schooling is offered by most Armenian-American communities, large or small. The *Armenian American Almanac* (1990) lists 62 such schools. They are usually sponsored by church committees, voluntary associations, or political parties and held in church basements or meeting rooms. Generally, these classes are scheduled to meet for two or more hours on Saturday mornings, or any afternoon of the week after regular school. Their enrollment ranges from as few as 6 or 8 pupils to more than 100, ages

**TABLE 4.4**
**List of Armenian All-Day Schools in the United States**
**(location, year established, enrollment in 1990, and highest grade level)**

| Name | | Year Established | Enrollment | Grade Level |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Southern CA** | | | | |
| AGBU Marie Manoogian | Canoga Park | 1976 | 320 G & 280 B | 12th |
| Armenian Mesrobian | Pico Rivera | 1965 | 179 G & 175 B | 12th |
| Holy Martyrs' Ferrahian | Encino | 1964 | 329 G & 316 B | 12th |
| Rose & Alex Pilibos Arm. | Los Angeles | 1969 | 420 G & 382 B | 12th |
| TCA Arshag Dickranian Arm. | Los Angeles | 1981 | 130 G & 146 B | 12th |
| Merdinian Arm. Evangelical | Sherman Oaks | 1982 | 272 | 9th |
| Vahan & Anoush Chamlian | Glendale | 1976 | 363 | 9th |
| Arm. Mekhitarist Fathers | La Crescenta | 1979 | 350 | 8th |
| Ari Guiragos Minassian | Santa Ana | 1986 | 44 G & 56 B | 6th |
| Armenian Sisters' Academy | Glendale | 1984 | 250 | 6th |
| Sahag-Mesrob Arm. Christian | Altadena | 1980 | 195 | 6th |
| Alfred & Marguerite Hovsepian | Pasadena | 1984 | 130 | 6th |
| **Northern CA** | | | | |
| Arm. Community School | Fresno | 1977 | 30 G & 56 B | 6th |
| Krouzian-Zekarian Vasbouragan | San Francisco | 1978 | 180 | 8th |

six to fourteen. In Saturday schools, children of Armenian descent learn the rudiments of the Armenian alphabet, history, and culture.

There are six Armenian summer camps run by various political, philanthropic, or religious organizations. They recruit campers from all over the United States and even abroad. The more established ones, such as AGBU Camp Nubar in the Catskills (NY) and Camp Haiastan of the Armenian Youth Federation in Massachusetts offer several sessions over an eight-week period during July and August. Essentially, they focus on fun activities that eight to fifteen year olds can enjoy, such as swimming, sailing, canoeing, tennis, volley ball, hikes, crafts. In addition to Armenian songs and folk dance, each day simple, short lessons in history and language are taught. Being in an Armenian atmosphere and having the opportunity to establish friendships with fellow Armenians are the primary goals. Having the opportunity to pick up some of the Armenian language and culture is perceived as an additional benefit. Still, it is not to be taken too seriously.

**TABLE 4.4 Continued**

| Name | Location | Year Established | Enrollment | Grade Level |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Massachusetts** | | | | |
| Armenian Sisters' Academy | Lexington | 1982 | 130 | 8th |
| St. Stephen's Arm. Day | Watertown | 1984 | 70 | 8th |
| AGBU Arm. Elementary | Watertown | 1970 | 117 | 6th |
| **Michigan** | | | | |
| AGBU Alex Manoogian | Southfield | 1969 | 184 | 12th |
| **New Jersey** | | | | |
| Hovnanian Armenian | New Milford | 1976 | 78 G & 77 B | 6th |
| **New York** | | | | |
| Holy Martyrs Arm. Day | Bayside | 1967 | 95 | 6th |
| St. Illuminator Day | Woodside | 1977 | 60 | 6th |
| **Pennsylvania** | | | | |
| Armenian Sisters' Academy | Radnor | 1967 | 82 G & 98 B | 8th |

Studies investigating ethnic schooling indicate that the same principles that apply to the cognitive aspect of education also apply to religious or ethnic education. Coleman and his associates in the classic *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (1966) found that community inputs such as the amount of money spent on school facilities, books, library, classroom size, teacher characteristics, morale, and so on had little effect on students' cognitive achievement and performance on tests. The variations in test scores were strongly associated to differences in the socioeconomic background of the students. Similarly, for Catholics and Jews, family values, attitudes, and religious maintenance at home were found to be pivotal in children's religious identity and observance (Greeley and Rossi 1966; S. Cohen 1974).

Parochial schools and *yeshivot* were not able to ingrain religious or ethnic identity in their pupils when little sympathy was found for it at home. Such schools can only buttress parental socialization; they cannot change it. Full-time religious schools were found to have the most powerful effect on identity maintenance, while supplementary forms of schooling had no or negligible effect (S. Cohen 1974, 325-26). In sum, the family unit is the most effective breeder of ethnic identification. Bock (1976), analyzing data from a national survey of American Jews, found that after a critical threshold of approximately 1,000 classroom hours of Jewish instruction, there was an increase in most conceptualizations of identification. Supplementary types of schooling were effective, but not efficient. Feelings about being Jewish (related to self-esteem) were mainly associated to family atmosphere and generational presence in the United States. On the other hand, behavioral indicators of identification increased with Jewish school experience.

In a survey of the alumni of the Ramaz High School, a progressive Jewish co-ed all-day school in New York City, on the occasion of its silver jubilee, Friedman (1989) found that it is possible to combine high academic standards with Orthodox Jewish instruction. A random sampling of the graduates of Ramaz demonstrated that overwhelming proportions had graduated from Ivy League colleges and universities. Subsequently, they were employed in professional occupations or in the business world and were earning incomes well above the national and Jewish community average. Most Ramaz alumni had realized the

American Dream, achieving intergenerational mobility. All the while, they had continued to measure strongly on Jewish identification, practiced ritual observance, and many were highly active members of their communities. Friedman concluded that the goals of the Ramaz founder have been fulfilled; it is possible to be American *and* Jewish, the two identities being fully compatible.

Encouraging as these results may be for ethnic maintenance and identity, parents as agents of socialization retain the power, at least while their children are still young, to determine if they will send them to ethnic schools. Whether their opinions on the academic standards or social milieu within such schools are validated or not, their attitudes are crucial. The results of the New York survey indicate that only a small proportion of Armenian-Americans advocate full-time schooling. Even if select, progressive, quality schools like Ramaz were available for Armenians, it is unlikely that they would serve more than a token number of future generations.

In response to a question: "Would you (do you) send your child(ren) to an Armenian day school?" almost 59 percent of the New York sample answered no, 35 percent said yes and the rest (6.4 percent) had no children, were not married, did not know, or did not answer (see table 4.5). Attitudes toward Armenian full-time education were most significant with generational status (.19*); half as many second-generation respondents (25.9 percent) were willing to send a child to such schools as foreign-born respondents (55.3 percent).

**TABLE 4.5**
**Frequency Distribution of Respondents Willing to Send Their Children to Armenian All-Day Schools by Generation**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 578 | (215) | (270) | (36) | (40) | (16) |
| No | 40.0 | 68.5 | 80.6 | 75.6 | 75.0 |
| Yes | 55.3 | 25.9 | 11.1 | 19.5 | 18.8 |
| Not applicable | 4.7 | 5.6 | 8.3 | 4.9 | 6.2 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Later-generation descendants were even less likely to advocate Armenian all-day schools. Respondents who did not, or would not send a child to an Armenian day school were asked to justify their answer (see table 4.6). About 28 percent of responses suggested that day schools were too far away (included are older respondents who added that there were no such schools when their children were young). Only 7.4 percent said such schools were expensive, almost 17 percent believed that their academic standards were too low, and about 9 percent regarded the social milieu to be inferior. A small number of respondents said they would not consider Armenian day schools because their spouse was not of Armenian descent.

The single highest response was the "other" category (34.5 percent of responses and 43 percent of cases). The volunteered answers were "too insulated," "too ethnic," or "too parochial." It should be emphasized that if this response category had been offered, a larger number of respondents would have chosen it as their rationale for not wanting to send a child to an Armenian full-time school. Foreign-born respondents were most likely to offer the expense and the low academic standard excuses. Twice as many later-generation respondents offered the "too ethnic or too insulated" argument as the first generation. There is a straight-line increase by generation in the belief that Armenian full-time schooling is insulating. Attitudes of

**TABLE 4.6**
**Frequency Distribution of Reasons for Not Supporting Armenian All-Day Schools by Generation**
**(from negatives in table 4.5, multiple response)**

| | Foreign-Born | US.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent + U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|
| N = 282 cases | (72) | (145) | (65) |
| Multiple response N=(351) | (88) | (181) | (82) |
| Too far or no school available | 29.5 | 29.8 | 21.9 |
| Expensive | 14.8 | 6.6 | 1.2 |
| Low academic standards | 26.1 | 16.0 | 8.5 |
| Low social milieu | 4.5 | 9.4 | 13.4 |
| Too ethnic or insulated | 22.7 | 33.2 | 50.0 |
| Spouse non-Armenian | 2.3 | 5.0 | 4.9 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

second-generation parents were in between the foreign-born and those from later generations.

A fifty-eight-year-old man, born in Iran, immigrated at age nineteen, said: Children "should grow in a cross-section of U.S. population." A twenty-five-year-old, fourth-generation man wrote: "Integrated, diverse environment would be lacking." Another fourth-generation, thirty-six-year-old woman indicated: "I want my child to have a more secular, non-ethnic education." "When in America do like the Americans," retorted a twenty-two-year-old woman who immigrated from Beirut at age six. "Hints of segregation," observed a middle-aged, second-generation woman. "Don't believe in parochial schools," noted a young, third-generation male. "I feel if one lives in the U.S., the children should go to an American school," said a forty-year-old woman who immigrated as a child from Iran. Others wrote: "Strong advocate of public schools," and "I want them to be able to relate, learn and socialize with people from all ethnic backgrounds"; yet again, "in some ways it can be delimiting in terms of living within the larger society." Last but not least, a fifty-four-year-old woman, born in Aleppo but raised in the United States, said: "Don't believe in segregation even for a good purpose, i.e., learning Armenian."

Because Saturday schools and summer camps do not replace basic education and are not a real threat to belief systems on educational attainment, more respondents, especially from later generations, agreed to the supplementary programs (see tables 4.7, 4.8). Overall, 67 percent of the sample would be willing to send a child to a part-time Armenian school (Saturday school) and 70 percent to summer camp; that is, twice as many as those who advocate full-time Armenian schools (35 percent). While 55.3 percent of the immigrant generation, 26 percent of the second generation, and only 16 percent of later-generation respondents do or would be willing to send a child to an Armenian day school (see table 4.6), the frequencies increase dramatically when it comes to supplementary forms of education. The percentages more than double for the second generation (65 percent) and increase by three and a half times for later generations (56 percent). Later-generation respondents were most likely to approve of summer camps, the least ethnic of institutions.

Irrespective of generational presence, the prime reason for sending a child to Saturday school is to learn the Armenian language, while the

prime reason for going to summer camp is to make good friends. Otherwise, all reasons are equally valid for both types of institutions. The least given reason is to learn new sports at summer camps. It is interesting that parents did not consider the duty of Armenian organizations to teach sports. Ethnicity plays a specialized role in people's lives; one gets the impression that Armenian institutions should not be wasted on services that could be bought elsewhere. Later-generation respondents are less concerned about the primacy of Armenianness in everyday life. Yet, they believe that their spirit is Armenian. This has been the message that has been clearly repeated throughout this study.

If Armenian educational institutions have a good reputation, symbolic Armenians might consider enrolling their son or daughter in such a camp or school. With the increasing emphasis on global and multicultural education in the United States in recent years, I hypothesize that if an Armenian all-day school develops a prestigious academic reputation and is able to attract children from upper-middle-class families, then nonethnics, and later-generation ethnics, might consider sending their children to such a school. The school run by the Armenian Sisters of Immaculate Conception in Radnor (PA) approximates such a reputation, and boasts that approximately 15 percent of its student body comes from non-Armenian background.[17] Ordjanian (1991, 110-13) found that American-born parents support and encourage the enrollment of non-Armenian students, and would even favor increasing their proportion. They feel it is an important

**TABLE 4.7**
**Frequency Distribution of Respondents Advocating Saturday Schools by Generation**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F. B. Parents | 1 Parent + U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|
| N = 392 cases | (165) | (175) | (52) |
| Multiple response N = (843) | (364) | (364) | (115) |
| Learn the Armenian language | 39.3 | 40.9 | 38.2 |
| Learn Armenian history and culture | 32.1 | 34.1 | 36.5 |
| Make Armenian friends | 28.6 | 25.0 | 25.1 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

preparation for the pluralistic society their child lives in. The Ramaz High School in Manhattan is another example, where superior academic standards are maintained with Orthodox Jewish teachings. Over the years, as the school grew and established its select, progressive, and high academic reputation, more and more parents who were less religiously observant started sending their children to Ramaz (Friedman 1989).

Armenian schools also need to develop a reputation for first-quality teaching staff, textbooks, computers, science laboratories, sports fields, and other facilities. Symbolic Armenian-Americans expect teachers to be competent college graduates, specialized in their field of knowledge. Moreover, they assume that teachers be well-versed with the latest (American) pedagogical concepts and techniques in child development. They also know that well-paid teachers are happy teachers who want to keep their jobs, thus go out of their way to cater to their students. In recent years, educational councils such as ALLRC (Armenian Language Lab and Resource Center affiliated with the Diocese) and AREC (Armenian Religious Educational Council affiliated with the Prelacy) have organized conferences, developed curriculum, and sponsored the publication of textbooks and instruction material geared for American-born children. These efforts are a start but by no means sufficient to meet the overwhelming problems of Armenian all-day schools.

**TABLE 4.8**
**Frequency Distribution of Respondents Advocating Summer Camp by Generation**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent + U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|
| N = 409 cases | (167) | (183) | (59) |
| Multiple response N = (1092) | (440) | (456) | (196) |
| Learn the Armenian language | 21.6 | 20.4 | 18.4 |
| Learn Armenian history and culture | 25.9 | 26.8 | 23.0 |
| Make Armenian friends | 29.3 | 30.9 | 24.5 |
| Have a good time | 15.9 | 16.7 | 22.4 |
| Learn new sports | 7.2 | 5.3 | 11.7 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

There seems to be a consensus among educators of children of Armenian descent in the United States that the available textbooks in Armenian are for the most part unsatisfactory. The majority of textbooks are either published in Beirut or Yerevan (a few others are published in Syria, the Mekhitarist Press in Venice and the United States). According to Ordjanian (1991, 142-143; 236-238), Armenian-American children find the material culture and social habits portrayed in the illustrations and text puzzling; they are also not familiar with the vocabulary and idioms used. The children reject the history books as myths, typically interpreting events as a battle between good and evil. They expect instead scientific data. Most significantly, foreign publishers do not seem to incorporate childhood developmental and learning theory in their products. Aesthetically, the books are not as appealing as the American ones the children are used to; they lack pictorial illustrations, the quality of the paper is poor, the illustrations are crude, photos are mostly in black and white, etc. Consequently, it is not surprising that these books do not provide a pleasurable learning experience for children growing up in America; they are not able to command their attention. Children often get bored and frustrated with the books.

Yeranouhi Garabedian, Armenian Studies Program Director at Krouzian-Zekarian School in San Francisco, concurs with the above remarks. She further adds that role models provided in the stories are highly inadequate for the American environment. Talking at a symposium on Armenian day schools she said: "I teach Armenian to 5th graders from 'Mayreni Lezou Book 4.' Every time we start reading a new short story, they ask the same question: Does this have a sad ending, too?" Garabedian observed that in the three stories her students had read during one month, one of the main characters had died tragically. Moreover, characters were orphans or poor or otherwise deprived, and the setting was a small village.[18]

Respondents' objections to Saturday school or summer camp are less intense, precisely because these are supplementary in nature and do not conflict with the values or structural requirements of American middle-class life. Armenian-Americans would like their children to speak Armenian, (only 10 percent disagreed that children should speak Armenian); however, implementing that decision is inconvenient. Several respondents found even Saturday schools to be taxing for the

busy schedules of their children. A second-generation woman wrote: "They went to school enough during the week. They need time for themselves." A third-generation man said: "Five days of school is enough." Another third-generation respondent indicated: "They are involved with sports activities in the community." A second-generation man commented: "No problem here [on principle] ... but we have not [sent our children to Saturday school]. They are too busy." Again a Middle Eastern-born woman who has lived in this country for about thirty-five years wrote: "I would, but didn't. It conflicted with sports and other interests."

For many foreign-born respondents, the Armenian language is an essential component of Armenianness. In one of the earliest studies of the Armenian day-school movement in the United States, Rustigian reported that the underlying philosophy of most school officials is that "the Armenian identity can only be preserved by the continued use of the language" (1979, 82). Therefore, it is not surprising that the communities with the largest number of recent immigrants were the first to open Armenian day schools after the mid-1960s (Rustigian 1979, 10, 147).[19]

For example, 50 percent of parents who sent their children to the Armenian Sisters' Academy in Philadelphia were born in the Middle East and North Africa (28 percent of these in Lebanon and Syria alone). Thirty-five percent were born in the United States, this included those who were not of Armenian descent, and 5 percent were born in Europe and Latin America (Ordjanian 1991, 114). Similarly, at Ferrahian High School in California, even though 33 percent of students were born in the United States, the vast majority of their parents were first generation. The rest of the students were foreign-born, these included 24 percent from Lebanon, 10 percent from Iran, and 5 percent from Turkey (Davidian 1986, 124).

For American-born ethnics, loyalty to the ancestral language conflicts with symbolic ethnicity. Learning a language is a demanding task. As seen above, some believe that sending a child to an Armenian full-time school may hinder his or her social mobility. The distinction between the immigrant generation and the U.S.-born is reflected in Saturday and Sunday schools that each group patronizes, respectively. The emphasis in Sunday schools is on teaching Christian principles, church doctrine, and religious history. Armenian words and phrases

are taught, but that is not the primary object of the Sunday schools, unlike the Saturday schools. From my interviews with community spokespersons, it became clear that the parents of children attending Saturday schools are more likely to be foreign-born, while the American-born are more likely to send their children to Sunday schools. As a second-generation, middle-aged woman aptly notes: "The Armenian-Americans place more emphasis on the church whereas the Armenians who come from abroad stress the language more. We must make Armenians realize that yes, the schools are important but being a good Christian is also vital in a child's life."

In constructing an ideal-typical model of attitudes toward Armenian educational institutions, I postulate that at one extreme, the most ethnically immersed immigrants would send their children to Armenian all-day schools; at the other end, the most Americanized, who continue to identify with their ancestral background, would send their children to Sunday schools in Armenian churches. In between, the least ethnic foreign-born and the most ethnic second generation and beyond would send their children to Saturday schools. Excluded from this typology are people of Armenian descent who are too alienated from the Armenian community to even consider any form of involvement or socialization for their children.

When all is said and done, Armenian all-day schools only cater to a very small proportion of the Armenian-American population; a little over five thousand students nationwide. The vast majority of children of Armenian descent in the United States attend public schools and a select group of affluent sons and daughters attend private elite schools. Even in the immigrant generation, most parents send their children to public schools. According to one estimate, the probability of attending Armenian schools in Los Angeles is between 15 and 20 percent (Davidian 1986, 66, 305).

Even though tuition in most Armenian all-day schools is subsidized by the community at large, costing parents about half of what it costs to run the schools (also a third to a fourth of what nonethnic private schools charge), still there are many new immigrant families in Los Angeles and elsewhere who cannot afford these rates. Ordjanian notes that school fees at the Armenian Sisters' Academy in Philadelphia are kept purposefully low. The rates are determined according to the median U.S. family income, yet for many it is a sacrifice. She goes on

to say that the annual school budget averages $400,000, but only half of it is derived from tuition (Ordjanian 1991, 111-12).

Recently, *Armenian International Magazine* reported that school fees had been raised several times in the last five years. Many parents voiced their concerns about the economic strain of Armenian education. AGBU, for instance, gave $140,000 to the Armenian Elementary School in Watertown in 1990 to cover its costs, and the Marie Manoogian School in Canoga Park had a deficit of $160,000. What are the solutions? The article quotes educator Gabriel Injejikian, the founder of the first Armenian school in the United States, as suggesting that "Armenian parents should make an added sacrifice, even at the cost of not buying a house for the sake of their children's national education." He also suggested that a national tribute *(azkayin doork)* could be levied by the church to finance communal services and schools. Such a system prevails in Lebanon, where Armenian families pay an annual duty depending on their income.[20] Both solutions to the tuition crisis, and in fact to the problem of operating Armenian all-day schools, are clear examples of the traditional form of ethnicity I described earlier. Suggesting that parents forgo the American Dream of owning their own house, imposing an income tax based on one's ascribed status are unlikely to be endorsed. They are downright un-American!

It is noteworthy that the influx of massive numbers of newcomers from Soviet Armenia and elsewhere has created serious problems for the public school boards in the Greater Los Angeles area. For example, the Glendale Unified School District recently reported that Armenians now make up the single largest, and growing, contingent of students with limited English proficiency. In 1990, there were 4,859 students making up 42.6 percent of all the students with limited English proficiency in the district. Of these, 61 percent were in the nineteen elementary schools, 21 percent were in the four junior high schools, and the rest were in the four high schools of Glendale. The rate of Armenian students with limited English proficiency has been increasing almost exponentially in the last decade; that is, there were 1,000 students in 1983, 2,309 in 1988, 3,654 in 1989, and 4,859 in 1990. In addition, there were 889 Armenian students, or 22.3 percent of those with fluent English proficiency in Glendale schools in 1990.[21] Other school districts suffer similar problems. For instance,

in 1990, Le Conte Junior High School in Hollywood had 750 Armenian students, mostly from Soviet Armenia. The ten or so other schools in the Hollywood district had equivalent numbers of Armenian students. The school boards have had to hire bilingual teachers to bridge the linguistic and cultural gaps of their students and set them on the road to acculturation.

*Armenian All-Day Schools: Two Case Studies*

How effective are Armenian all-day schools in socializing the next generation? So far, only two comprehensive case studies have been carried out on the subject: Richard Davidian (1986) examined the Ferrahian Armenian High School in Encino (CA), and Anahid Ordjanian (1991) analyzed the Armenian Sisters' Academy, which uses the Montessori system and teaches preschoolers to eighth graders, in the suburbs of Philadelphia. Each of these studies has its particular methodological and theoretical perspective. Davidian's goal as a linguist was to test the proficiency of students in English and Armenian. He surveyed 102 students in the eleventh and twelfth grades on a number of items and interviewed eleven additional students for ethnographic data. All but one of his informants were foreign-born, they had lived in the United States for an average of 7.5 years. Ordjanian, as a cultural anthropologist, used participant observation during her seventeen months of fieldwork and in-depth interviews with parents, teachers, and school board members. Using a political economy perspective, her goal was to answer questions as to why parents send their children to an Armenian school, what ideologies does the school, in general, and the Armenian studies curriculum, in particular, impart to its students.

Davidian found that, on average, English proficiency overtakes and surpasses the Armenian. "Pressure for Armenian young people to learn English is everywhere, even among Armenian peers. In Ferrahian school, those who don't speak it are teased by those who do" (Davidian 1986, 260). Students tend to compartmentalize the languages they speak, depending on their interlocutors and the topic. For example, 85 percent spoke Armenian with their grandparents, 75 percent with their parents, 60 percent with their siblings, and 46 percent with their friends (Davidian 1986, 268). There was a steady

decline with each generation in the use of the Armenian language and a reciprocal increase in English usage. Interestingly, on average, 51 percent of students thought and reflected with themselves in Armenian. Moreover, the longer students had lived in the United States, the more likely they were to use English.

Yet, Davidian also found that the longer the student stayed in an Armenian school the higher were his or her chances of becoming fluent in two languages. Over 80 percent of students said they spoke, read, and wrote English and Armenian very well, and over 90 percent said they spoke both languages very well. Additionally, the longer they were in an Armenian school, the more likely they were to choose to speak Armenian with their friends. That is, those who spent one to six years in Armenian schools had a 30 percent probability of speaking Armenian with friends, those who spent seven to twelve years had a 45 percent probability, and those who spent thirteen to eighteen years had a 58 percent probability (Davidian 1986, 275). The study found that the school is successful in teaching Armenian, but only if the student's family environment actively reinforces identity maintenance and encourages participation in the organized Armenian-American community. These results are consistent with those of other ethnic groups that I have mentioned above.

Thus the empirical evidence confirms the fears of those who perceive assimilation as a plague. "The young people are adopting much of the American culture which surrounds them in spite of the sheltered Armenian environment found in the Armenian school" (Davidian 1986, 287). Consistent with the results of the New York survey, that is only part of the story. In Davidian's opinion, Ferrahian High School is trying to walk a fine line, advocating two, almost contradictory, goals. On the one hand, it promotes economic and political integration in the dominant society; on the other hand, it tries to avoid cultural and structural assimilation. In other words, the school instills in students the idea "that group worth is enhanced by individual achievement outside of the Armenian community" (Davidian 1986, 296); at the same time, it provides formal instruction in Armenian culture and language and indoctrinates them with the ideology of cultural preservation.

Ordjanian is more candid in her conclusions that the Armenian school she observed in Philadelphia does not fulfill its stated goals of

preserving the Armenian culture, "in the sense of preserving the ways of life of past generations" (Ordjanian 1991, 256). Rather, the school teaches a reinvented Armenian culture, a symbolic or polyglot version. This is done explicitly through the Armenian studies curriculum; and implicitly through the annual reenactment of ceremonial rituals such Vartanantz and Genocide commemoration day; the folk dance styles children are taught to perform in public and private; and the culinary and dietary habits, labeled Armenian, that students practice in the Cooking Club. All these are symbolic markers that define and distinguish what is Armenian from what is not Armenian *(hai* versus *odar)*.

The new culture borrows something old from the past and something new from neighboring cultures. It homogenizes the varying definitions of Armenianness by finding a common denominator acceptable to a broad spectrum of people. It is a culture that adapts effectively to the needs of collective life in the United States at the threshold of the twenty-first century. The emergent traditions and symbols consciously minimize the diversity within the group. By emphasizing interdependence and responsibility toward one's family, church and ethnic group, and fostering communal ties, the school teaches that on the one hand, students are members of an ethnic group "who can cooperate politically as an 'interest' group" in the American arena; on the other hand, they are members of a diasporan people.

Most significantly, the school provides "quality" education. It fulfills the real and immediate educational requirement of preparing students to compete successfully in the American system (Ordjanian 1991, 257). Students learn the necessary skills, habits, and values that are essential to achieve social mobility and assume rewarding roles in the postindustrial economy they live in. For example, they learn self-reliance, self-discipline, critical thinking, creativity, emotional self-control, reliability, and the ability to work for long periods. Parents and friends of the school measure success by the number of "acceptances" the alumni receive from prestigious schools and colleges and the high-status jobs they eventually hold.

What about Armenian proficiency? Ordjanian writes, "immediate economic and practical needs take precedence over those of ethnic affiliation" (1991, 157). Even though students progressively learn more and more of the Armenian language as they move from one grade to the next, the five periods of Armenian instruction per week

(13.2 percent of total) indicate that the subject does not have high priority. Ordjanian's analysis supports my contention in this chapter. She found that there is little consensus among the parents as to what Armenian proficiency means. Lebanese and other Middle Eastern-born parents are more likely to demand that their child be highly literate in Armenian, even insisting that the the number of instruction periods be increased.

The advocates of language note that learning Armenian provides students with a mastery of a rare language, a sort of elite knowledge that solidifies their membership not only in the Armenian community in the United States but also in the diaspora. Moreover, they note that such knowledge increases the cognitive skills of students, making it easier for them to learn other languages. Some even find that knowledge of the Armenian language is useful in admitting a child into an elite high school or an Ivy League college because of the new popularity of multicultural education and the conscious policy of admissions officers to create a diverse student body.

In contrast, American-born parents who do not speak Armenian themselves find the expectations of some teachers unrealistic, especially those not trained in the United States. To them conversational knowledge of Armenian is sufficient. They think too much stress on learning Armenian is a waste of time, and unfair. More specifically, they are angered that a low grade in Armenian will lower the grade-point average of their child and disadvantage him/her when competing for reputable high schools. Ordjanian further remarks that

> while pleased if their child is bilingual, [American-born parents] recognize the difficulties of transmitting the language in the United States, where a speech community does not, for all intents and purposes, exist. Therefore, their concern is towards the level of their child's achievement in mastering English, which represents, for them, a skill unequivocally necessary not only for survival in the U.S. but for social mobility (a goal which they aspire to and which the U.S. system makes it possible for them to achieve). (1991, 214-15)

Last but not least, Ordjanian found that contrary to assumptions, the Armenian studies program is not able to teach pride in the ancestral heritage because "Armenians still seem convinced of the inferiority of Armenian society vis-à-vis Western society" (1991, 222). Like a child who will not love his/her mother less because she is not very pretty, students are taught that their culture and history may not have been

brilliant or prestigious, but it is still their own. Ordjanian advocates the creation of a new, revised history which I will describe below. Albeit, the school heightens the students' awareness of the injustices suffered by the Armenians throughout their history and teaches them to challenge American and generally Western cultural superiority.

In conclusion, the all-day Armenian schools do not reproduce traditional Armenians as many of their advocates believe. A review of the two case studies indicates that these schools socialize young men and women to function in the mainstream, without relinquishing their ancestral identity. These schools produce second- and third-generation Armenian-Americans somewhat more steeped in their ancestral language and heritage than previous cohorts. However, the culture they impart to their charges is a symbolic one, constructed to match the requirements of ethnic life in the United States. Furthermore, the community in which the parents hope their children will participate as adults is unlikely to be a speech community. Finally, I need to ask, how representative are these case studies of all-day Armenian schools in the United States? They are probably two of the more successful institutions because of their longevity and the reputations they have gained; yet the issues and problems they face are fundamentally similar to all the others.

### *Armenian Higher Education and Research Centers*

The development of higher education and research in Armenian studies in the United States had to await the coming of age of the second generation. Growing up in the first half of the twentieth century was difficult for children of all the "new" immigrant groups, including the Armenians. Public school teachers, who were in charge of the Americanization process, rarely missed a chance to belittle their charges' "foreign" behavior or their "less enlightened" parents. Peers were no less tolerant (e.g., Dobkin 1977). What the American-born children learned in public about their ancestral heritage, or, more accurately, its distinctive absence from all subject matter, contradicted what their families told them in private. It was hard to convince oneself that one's ethnic background had any value. Upon maturity and familiarity with the American system, a whole generation wanted to prove to themselves and to the world that Armenian history and

culture was indeed worthwhile. It certainly deserved mention in mainstream texts and reference books. To gain acceptance and legitimacy as a people, on a par with the "advanced" nations of the world, Armenian-American specialists had to use the methodological techniques and theoretical perspectives of Western scholarship.

In 1955, the National Association of Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) was founded "to foster the study of Armenian history, culture, and language on an active, scholarly, and continuous basis in America" (*Armenian American Almanac* 1990, 16). More specifically, one of its main aims was "to work for the establishment of endowed professorships, fellowships, scholarships, departments, and courses of instruction in Armenian studies at American colleges, universities, and other institutions of higher learning."[22] As a result, in 1961, Professor Avedis K. Sanjian became assistant professor of Armenian studies at Harvard University. "This marked the first instance of the appointment of a scholar to a full-time professorship in Armenian Studies anywhere in the United States" (Adalian 1990-91, 80).

The timing was fortuitous for two reasons: first, America was soon to experience the so-called ethnic revival movement. Ethnic heritage studies were fashionable, even the government was providing funding. Second, the massive immigration from the Middle East and Soviet Bloc brought in new energy, enthusiasm, and candidates and staff for Armenian studies. Consequently, a whole gamut of research institutes,[23] endowed chairs,[24] departments, and programs for Armenian studies, associations for Armenology scholars[25] mushroomed, just like the other types of schooling I have discussed above.

At present, Harvard, Columbia (established 1979), and the University of California, Los Angeles (established 1969) have endowed chairs in Armenian history and culture and grant MA and PhD degrees in Armenian studies (see Adalian 1990-91). There are also many universities and colleges that offer undergraduate courses in Armenian language and literature, ancient and modern history, history of art and architecture, and so on. Among those that do so on a regular basis are: the American Armenian International College, La Verne (CA); Boston University; California State University, Fresno; Cleveland State University; Tufts University; University of Connecticut, Storrs; University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; University of

Michigan, Dearborn; and the University of Pennsylvania.

Undergraduate courses in Armenian history and language serve a number of functions. They satisfy the curiosity of young men and women about their ancestral background during a period in their life course when they are most likely to be in search of an ethnic or religious identity. Course content is assumed to instill pride in their roots by explaining scientifically the role of Armenian history and culture in world events. Such courses can be attractive to college students because of their utilitarian value. As I have stated before, convenience is the key to practice. Furthering one's knowledge about one's ethnic background while earning elective credits is well suited to symbolic Armenian-Americans. Undergraduate courses in Armenian studies also serve latent functions. If a young person's interest in Armenianness is sustained, the community gains an active participant. These courses also provide essential preparatory training for future cadre for the ethnic church and organizations.

In addition to regular semester-long or quarter-long courses, students interested in Armenian studies have increasingly more options to choose from. Among these are a couple of study-abroad programs in Venice[26] and Yerevan[27] during the summer months. Through intensive instruction in language and culture, students earn college credits, and on top of that have the opportunity to travel and have fun. Among other programs available,[28] the Siamanto Academy is noteworthy. It provides college credits by offering Saturday classes during a three-year period.[29] This variety is attractive to young Armenian-Americans. Brought up in a consumer-oriented society, they have developed a wide range of individualized needs that they expect to be fulfilled. Moreover, Armenian studies, in general, and the summer or travel abroad programs, in particular, increase structural ties among young people of Armenian descent and enhance feelings of belonging.

With the declaration of independence in the Republic of Armenia and the removal of ideological controversies, homeland-diaspora relationships can in the future be strengthened or reestablished in earnest. Like American Jewish youngsters who spend a few months to a year on a kibbutz in Israel, it may become easier for American-born Armenians to study in Yerevan during the summer months, even spend their "junior year abroad." College programs are only one option in such an exchange. Work camps may be another. They too

are learning experiences that serve similar functions to those mentioned above. For example, the Land and Culture Organization, Inc. organizes groups of young people to restore historic Armenian buildings and monuments on ancestral lands.[30]

Taking a course or two in Armenian history, traveling throughout Armenia during the summer months, and restoring ancient monuments are congruent with symbolic ethnicity. Making a career out of one's ethnicity is an option that only a select few have taken or are likely to take. In the last couple of decades, a number of men and women have earned MA and PhD degrees in Armenian studies. Not many others are encouraged to follow their example because upon graduation, these "specialists" face limited opportunities for full-time employment. Only the lucky few continue to earn a living in their field of specialization.

Since the majority of symbolic Armenian-Americans do not use the ancestral culture, they have an urgent need to preserve it for posterity. They need what I call "knowledge banks" such as Armenian studies programs and research institutes to meet their goals, in addition to preparing specialists to do so. The task at hand is to translate Armenian classics into English, transcribe the music, document and codify other art forms, catalogue and reference sources, and so on. In other words, the objective is to make Armenian culture and history readily accessible to nonnatives. Ultimately, centers for Armenian research and scholars working in Armenian studies need to validate the prestige and standing of this culture in the eyes of the Western world. Through this process they vicariously boost the self-esteem of symbolic Armenian-Americans.

Ordjanian (1991) concurs that scholars working on Armenian studies serve an important function for Armenian-Americans. By fostering positive views, they help them achieve upward mobility. Still, she criticizes these specialists for not challenging the basic Western premise that Armenian culture is less valuable. So far, studies produced by American-trained scholars have argued that Armenian history and culture is similar, even "equal" to, or "as good as" Western societies. She goes on to say, "comparisons of societies, as if they represent the sum of similar historical experiences, has robbed a subjugated people like Armenians of a dignified view of their past, as well as present, circumstances" (Ordjanian 1991, 258).

Ordjanian proposes that a political economy perspective be adopted for studies of Armenian history. She argues that such an approach would "reveal the differing interests of social groups" (Ordjanian 1991, 261), even those of certain Armenian classes, groups, and political parties that have dominated other Armenians during various historical periods. By explaining the consequences of political and economic action by foreign and domestic forces and the vested interests of various players, a clearer image of the past can be achieved. Ordjanian suspects, however, that her suggestion may be resisted by the elite. This is true because the moneyed elite in the Armenian-American community, as elsewhere in the diaspora, provide the major donations that keep "knowledge banks" in business.

What has been the role of Armenian educational institutions in the United States, then? Writing for the special issue of *Ararat* magazine on Armenian-Americans, Nishan Parlakian (1977, 74) concludes his article, "ABC to PhD: Armenian Studies in America" as follows:

> The reason for this expansion [in Armenian educational institutions] is clear enough. It has to do with the continued growth of ethnic identity and pride as well as the deep need for understanding of a unique language, history and people and with a shared holocaustic agony. It is part of a continual effort to keep the Armenian spirit alive.
>
> Detractors may say that the growth is a kind of unnecessary chauvinism in a country so democratic as the United States. But it is necessary just as the same sort of thing is necessary to other ethnics—more so perhaps because Armenians number so few in the world. Nor is it relevant to say the lower schools are havens for segregationists who want clean private schools for their children. Without the Saturday and Day Schools, there would be fewer qualified Armenians from whose ranks must come the Armenian leaders and clergy of the future and there would be fewer scholars to carry on research, scholarship, and teaching of Armenology on the highest levels.... If the Bicentennial has made anything obvious, it is that the wonder of America is in the richness and strength of its diversity. We now recognize that the rich second heritage of each individual people and culture is important and needs to be preserved.

Indeed, much of Parlakian's remarks sum up this section as well. Yet, I need to add a caveat. Lest the reader forgets, the rich second heritage that is mentioned above is to be enjoyed in the sidestream. All the rush to preserve heritage and prepare leadership is precisely because language and the ancient culture is no longer taken for granted, it is no longer part of a living tradition.

## The Emergent Armenian-American Subculture

According to one of the community leaders I interviewed, there is much confusion among Armenian-Americans as to what constitutes their patrimony. My informant said:

> In 1915 we lost our intelligentsia. The Armenians who came to America after the massacres were peasants. They didn't know much about their history, background, etc. They didn't have the intellectual class to interpret culture for them. They were unable to pass on the ideals of a high culture to the second-generation. The second and third generation born in America are ashamed of their background. They equate Armenian culture with a peasant culture.

Moreover, because of the tragic events at the turn of the twentieth century, the exodus from historic lands, the near annihilation of the intellectual class, the forces of industrialization, modernization, and assimilation, much of the ancient culture of the Armenian people has been lost.

What constitutes the cultural heritage of an immigrant group in America? I define *culture* as an idea system that creates and sustains material and nonmaterial products compatible with its goals and requirements. It is the way of life of a people that includes their values, goals, norms, belief systems, ideologies, body of knowledge, rituals, and as well as architecture, painting, sculpture, music, literature, crafts, dance, and so on. The heritage of a people consists of the high culture and the popular culture (Gans 1974); the great traditions and the little traditions (Redfield 1955; Singer 1972), both sacred and secular. The material and nonmaterial products of the ruling classes make up the high culture. They are more likely to have survived the turbulent forces of history than the popular culture of the ordinary people. The ancient cultural remains that make contemporary Armenians proud, such as the illuminated manuscripts and the architectural monuments, were once the possessions of a small privileged elite.

The great traditions of a people are generalized belief systems and rituals that permeate all levels of society. For example, Armenians as a Christian nation believed in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which they reenacted annually during Holy Week. The little traditions are more likely to be localized; they vary by region, by social status, and by urban-rural residence. They are beliefs, customs,

and practices the family and local community observe during rites of passage and daily living, such as those surrounding betrothal, marriage, childbearing and rearing, health and disease, life and death. The little traditions also include customs related to the celebration of seasonal changes and events in the sacred calendar, such as the blessing of the grape harvest on *Asdvadzadzin* (Feast of Assumption), and the fast of young virgin women before the Saint Sarkis name day, in the hope of finding a suitable match. Additionally, they include the oral traditions: the legends, proverbs, the songs, the dances, the cuisine, and so on.

The cultural baggage Armenian immigrants brought with them to the United States at the turn of the twentieth century consisted of the great and little traditions, the popular culture of the peasant and petit bourgeois (artisan and merchant) classes. Out of their original context, many of these imported traditions proved to be cumbersome, even meaningless. Besides, immigrants were too busy trying to survive in a hostile environment they were ill-prepared for. They did not see the need to sustain practices and beliefs that were no longer functional. Instead, Armenian immigrants adapted what they could of their cultural legacy to the requirements of American society. A new culture emerged; albeit a symbolic one.

The ancient high culture had to await the second generation to be rehabilitated and owned by Armenian-Americans. It was the task of the knowledge banks I have described above to appropriate the elite culture and reclaim the historical episodes that would make present-day descendants proud. These were more likely to be periods of territorial expansion and military triumphs, and eras of stability and prosperity that gave rise to golden ages of literary and artistic innovations. For instance, illuminated manuscripts are a testimony to a heroic and glorious past. When visiting the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, DC or the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore where several of these manuscripts are found, Armenian-Americans ask to see them and demand they be displayed more prominently.

Contemporary Armenian-Americans also preserve and cherish whatever heirlooms their ancestors may have left them. Grandmother's embroidered wedding dress or ceramic dishes from Kutahia, great-uncle's watch or Armenian Bible, great-aunt's needle lace doilies or old photographs[31] are displayed prominently in the

homes of Armenian-Americans. A few items become museum pieces. At present, the American Museum of Natural History in New York, the Immigration Museum at Ellis Island, and the Armenian Library and Museum of America, Inc. in Watertown have small collections of Armenian artifacts, needlework, rugs, textiles, coins, metalwork, etc. These too are knowledge banks, for the popular culture

With the fading of Armenian language proficiency with each passing generation in the United States, the oral traditions—the legends, fairy tales, songs, proverbs, among others—pass away unnoticed. Similarly, the family customs and practices of over a hundred years ago are not as easily retrievable either. Sociologists trying to measure change are at a loss because there are few sources that describe the little traditions of the Armenian past. The exceptions are few and far between. Noteworthy is the study of the changing pattens of family life of Armenian immigrants and their descendants in Fresno by Nelson (1953). A more recent study relied on the recollections of elderly Armenian immigrants to document village life before 1914 (Villa and Matossian 1982).

Armenians in America today, even recent immigrant cohorts, follow predominantly American customs at weddings and funerals, as they have adopted the practice of bridal and baby showers[32] and the celebration of birthdays, anniversaries, and Thanksgiving. Said a community spokesman describing wedding ceremonies among Armenian-Americans: "These are presents of Hollywood. All religions, all groups have adopted it. The source is the same. People feel this is great source of satisfaction. It is part of the local culture."

Likewise, after documenting the traditional Armenian custom of ceremonial or mock abduction at weddings among Fresno immigrants after World War II, Nelson (1953) noted that it is being practiced less often because fewer and fewer young people know about it.[33] He found that the peripheral elements of the wedding ceremony, such as clothes, number and composition of attendants, and music follow American custom. Interestingly, he goes on to say,

> While peripheral elements have generally been accepted without much difficulty, certain changes considered more significant apparently met with obstacles overcome only by societal insistence. Armenian society succeeded by boycotting, or threatening to boycott, the church that would not "modernize" its ceremonies, and consequently, the church was compelled to accept changes thus forced upon it. (Nelson 1953, 217)

I asked several of the community leaders I interviewed to suggest what they believed to be "typical" Armenian values. The following is a list they provided: generosity and hospitality;[34] hard work and industriousness; resourcefulness and ingenuity *(jarbeeg);* filial respect and loyalty; parental sacrifice and keeping the good name, honor and reputation of the family *(badeev)* by avoiding shame *(amot).* Similarly, some of the respondents in the New York study associated these values with Armenian culture, such as the seventy-six-year-old, second-generation, Protestant Armenian lady who wrote somewhat chauvinistically, "Armenians are a fine race of people, I am proud to be one. All are intelligent, hardworking, respectable people, kind, generous, sympathetic. Any Armenian home you visit, there is always a generous amount of food and love shown to the family, friends, neighbors, etc."

Many of the values suggested above as typically Armenian are rather inherent characteristics of all small, face-to-face, close-knit communities with agrarian economic means of production. Moreover, for several centuries, the Armenian family was organized patrilineally; that is, descent was traced through the male line. The patriarch, the eldest male member of the household, controlled the communal assets, including the labor of all the members. Women and younger men were not favored by such a system. Upon marriage, a woman joined the household of her husband, and often, until she gave birth to a male heir, her position there was virtually powerless. In other words, filial duty, family honor, and shame are common in many agrarian, patriarchal, folklike societies.

Other values might have been borrowed from neighboring societies. For example, the Armenian traditional concepts of family honor[35] and shame are very similar to to the Arab concepts of *ird* and *Sharaf* (e.g., see Antoun 1968), or the Greek *philotimo* (Kourvetaris 1981, 176; Moskos 1989, 93, 104, 110), the Italian *onore della famiglia* (Johnson 1985, 108). The issue of punctuality is anecdotal. Armenians are reputed to be late. Many social functions sponsored by Armenian associations start late, consequently called "Armenian time" *(Haygagan Jumm).* But this is not unique to Armenians; Greeks have "Greek time" (Moskos 1989, 96), Italians have "Italian time," Jews have "Jewish time," and so on.

Given the ambiguity about the great and little traditions, also given the unanimous agreement among my informants that old customs and

practices have changed, I am unable to analyze the prevalence of the popular cultural heritage of the Armenians. The study of changing values, norms, and traditions merits a separate investigation. Instead, I examine the extent of utilization of the emergent secular culture of Armenian-Americans among the New York respondents. Whatever its exact provenance, this emergent culture is produced and enacted in the United States by men and women of Armenian descent. It includes the language, literature, music, song, dance, architecture, paintings, sculpture, crafts, cuisine, as well as the values, norms, rituals, etc.

### *The New York Sample's Maintenance of Secular Culture*

New York respondents were asked whether they read Armenian literature, either in Armenian or in translation, and whether they ever bought any works of art, such as paintings, sculpture, embroidery, or antiques especially because they were made by Armenians. Use of the Armenian media was measured by two questions: one, the approximate number of Armenian newspapers and/or magazines (in English or Armenian) the respondent usually received; second, the frequency of listening to Armenian radio programs.

Overall, only 13.6 percent of respondents said they almost always read Armenian literature, 32.1 percent said they read sometimes, and the remaining 54.4 percent said they hardly ever read Armenian literature. Table 4.9 shows the distribution of generational status by respondents scoring "high" (ethnic position) on reading Armenian literature, buying Armenian art (sometimes to almost always), and receiving two or more Armenian newspapers and magazines. Foreign-born respondents read Armenian literature about twice as often as American-born generations (.27*). The latter are most familiar with the English-language works of fellow Armenian-Americans. A thirty-five-year-old third-generation man exemplifies this. He remarked that he had not read Armenian literature "except for Michael Arlen and William Saroyan." Saroyan needs no introduction to the American public. Arlen, on the other hand, achieved some recognition in the mid-1970s with his work "Passage to Ararat," first published in *The New Yorker*.

There is support of Armenian literature and art, but it is weak, in each case less than 7 percent of the answers were in the "always" category on a five-point scale of never to always. Only 8.2 percent

bought art made by Armenians almost always, 28 percent sometimes, and about 64 percent hardly ever. First-generation respondents were also most likely to collect art, though the differences between the generations were less sharp (.12*). Responses for receiving publications were higher. Only 26.8 percent of all respondents do not receive any Armenian newspapers or magazines, about 60 percent receive between one and three, and the remaining 13.6 percent receive more than four. Again, more foreign-born respondents scored high (60 percent) on receiving Armenian publications than the American-born (.19*); however, about 40 percent of the second generation continued

**TABLE 4.9**
**Frequencies of Respondents Scoring "High" on Three Variables of Secular Culture by Generation**
**(in percent)**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 581-583 | (218) | (271) | (36) | (41) | (15) |
| Read Arm. literature | 63.8 | 34.4 | 36.1 | 22.0 | 37.5 |
| Buy Arm. art | 44.5 | 33.9 | 25.0 | 21.9 | 26.7 |
| Get Arm. newspapers | 60.5 | 41.0 | 40.0 | 24.4 | 25.0 |

**TABLE 4.10**
**Frequencies of Respondents Scoring "High" on Three Variables of Secular Culture by Religious Affiliation**
**(in percent)**

| | Apostolic Armenian | Protestant Armenian | Catholic Armenian | Other (Non-Arm.) | No Religion |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 581-583 | (369) | (56) | (22) | (92) | (36) |
| Read Arm. literature | 52.6 | 48.2 | 36.4 | 23.9 | 33.3 |
| Buy Arm. art | 41.7 | 44.6 | 13.6 | 23.6 | 13.9 |
| Get Arm. newspaper | 54.9 | 50.0 | 36.4 | 25.0 | 22.2 |

to do so. Receiving a newspaper, magazine, or newsletter is not a demanding task. Moreover, receiving does not mean reading. Often Armenian organizations send their in-house magazines or newsletters free of charge to households on their mailing lists, as a respondent noted: "It is sent to me."

The proportions of respondents affiliated with non-Armenian denominations and those with no religion were about half of the proportions of the Apostolics on all three variables measuring secular culture (see table 4.10). Similarly, about 58 percent of respondents who were partial to Armenian political ideologies (Hunchag, Ramgavar, Tashnag, *Chezok* [nonpartisan]) read Armenian literature most frequently, compared to 30 percent of those who were indifferent, and 35 percent of those who rejected ethnic politics. Again, about 50 percent of the partisans bought art frequently, versus 20 percent of the indifferents. Mixed parentage reduces the proportion of people receiving Armenian newspapers by more than half, from 50 percent for respondents with two Armenian parents to 23 percent for those with one Armenian parent. There are equal declines in reading Armenian literature (48 percent to 30 percent) and buying art (32 percent to 22 percent).

Interestingly, socioeconomic variables were not statistically significant with all three variables used to measure maintenance of secular heritage. Like a young graduate student who found the question on buying art "a rather class-biased question," I had assumed that with more income, a person could afford to buy more artwork and subscribe to more publications. Contrary to these assumptions, people who make less than $20,000 bought more Armenian art than those who make double or triple that amount. How is this possible? Art comprises a wide range of collectibles. It could be high art, such as an oil painting by Gorky or a sculpture by Nakian, or it could be popular crafts or artifacts such as a lace doily made by grandmother, a souvenir *khatchkar* (cross) from Yerevan, or a record of Khachaturian's *Sabre Dance*. The comments respondents made reflect this. A fifty-two-year-old, second-generation man said: "I do enjoy my collection of Armenian music." Another elderly man who immigrated as a child wrote: "Oh Yes, I have two Tolegians, a Yaghjian (prof at a Southern Univ.); Art books, collectibles, embroidery. I also have a Khachaturian, records, etc."

Armenian-Americans feel positive about their cultural heritage. They are very proud of both their ancient and modern high culture. They admire the illuminated manuscripts of Toros Roslin, the architecture of the cathedral at Akhtamar, the music of Gomidas Vartabed, and the paintings of Aivazovsky. They particularly enjoy showing off to their non-Armenian friends and acquaintances that Arshile Gorky, William Saroyan, and Alan Hovaness among many others were (or are) their compatriots. Additionally, Armenian-Americans cherish their family heirlooms and old photographs, as they find many of the popular Armenian music and the folk dances delightful. In general, Armenian-Americans would like to pass this pride and heritage to their progeny.

For example the statement: "Our children should learn Armenian dance and music" received unanimous approval in the pretests. Even when respondents disagreed mildly with such statements, the objection was not against Armenian culture per se. A twenty-eight-year-old woman whose father is an Armenian immigrant and mother a Midwesterner reacted to the statement "Public schools should teach something about the history and culture of the Armenian people" by saying: "There are *many, many,* races in the world. The public schools already have a heavy burden" (emphasis in original). In sum, these sentiments and displays of one's ancestral legacy are typical of symbolic ethnics, especially where no prior knowledge of the language or history is required. Practicing the culture is another matter. As a rule, they would encourage the perpetuation of Armenian culture as long as it is in the sidestream, and as long as it does not become a burden.

### *Armenian Press and Radio*

The *Armenian American Almanac* (1990) lists a total of sixteen Armenian newspapers published in the United States. These papers and other magazines, journals, and newsletters are distributed by mail. Though a West Coast paper might take up to ten days to reach New York City or New Jersey, it is not unusual for area residents to receive West Coast publications and vice versa. Four newspapers are published in Watertown (MA), one in Queens (NY), and one in Paramus (NJ). All the others are published in the Los Angeles area. Of

the sixteen, two are daily newspapers,[36] two biweekly, ten are weeklies, and the rest monthlies or periodicals. Besides newspapers, there are less than half a dozen literary and scholastic journals that are published in the United States and a large number of in-house magazines and newsletters of organizations, churches, and research libraries and centers.

Five of the six papers that are published only in the Armenian language are organs of the three Armenian political parties.[37] Their circulation is relatively small, ranging from 1,000 to 2,500 copies. The one exception targets an immigrant clientele, and is written in Eastern Armenian. Three other newspapers are bilingual, and in one case trilingual (Armenian, English, French). These bilingual papers also cater to the new immigrant population. All three are published in Los Angles, and their circulation is impressive—6,000 for the *Asbarez* daily (10,000 for its Saturday edition), and 16,500 for *Hai Gyank* and the trilingual *Nor Gyank.*

One can easily deduce from this information that the readers of the Armenian language press are almost exclusively from the first generation. Armenian-Americans do not need to know how to read and write Armenian to sporadically participate in communal activities, to take pride in their cultural heritage, or to feel Armenian. The Armenian-American subculture can be maintained while the vast majority of Armenian-Americans are not proficient in the ancestral language. In fact, I was clearly told by the owner/publisher of the *Armenian Reporter* that there is no market for Armenian language publications in the United States. He explained to me that in 1967 when his paper started, it had an Armenian language supplement. After a couple of years, the supplement had to be discontinued. It had lost money due to lack of readers. While political parties may be able to afford to publish Armenian-language newspapers that are economically not profitable, independent entrepreneurs cannot.

The *Armenian Reporter* is the only English-language newspaper in the research area with a circulation of about 4,800. It is an independent weekly (nonpartisan in terms of ethnic politics), individually owned and operated by a Middle Eastern-born Armenian. The yearly subscription cost $35 at the time of the survey. It has since gone up to $55. Other than regional news and ideological/political proclivities, Armenian-American newspapers cover roughly the same type of

stories, features articles and classified ads. To illustrate the focus of these papers and the interests of their readers, I collected a sample of the headlines that appeared in ten issues of the *Armenian Reporter* between April 3 and June 5, 1986, approximately corresponding to the period the New York survey was being conducted. Below is a selection of the headlines. I have classified these by the following categories: lead stories, feature stories, letters to the editor, calendar of events, and classified ads.

**Sample Headlines from the Armenian Press**

*Lead Stories*

Edouard Balladur, No. 2 Man in French Cabinet, Said To Be of Armenian Origin
Turks May Allow Repairs of Armenian Church in Iskenderun
Turks Said to Soon Release Very Rev. Manuel Yergatian Congressional Delegation Reports after Visit to Turkey
Massachusetts Gov. Dukakis to Participate in Armenian Martyrs' Day Memorial Services
Armenians in Holland Want to Buy Back Europe's 1st Armenian Church
"American-Turkish Day" Planned by Turkish groups in New York City for April 19
Soviet Armenians Said to Fear Nuclear Disaster Similar to Chernobyl Accident
4 Armenians Murdered in W. Beirut in 2 Days
Unidentified Underground Group Claim International Magazines Assassinations Will Continue until Armenian Presence Is "Terminated"

*Feature Stories*

Proxmire and Aspin to receive "Friends of Armenia" Award
Dr Grigorian's Lectures at Columbia University Are Well Attended; Many Young People Are Present
Senators Link Armenians and Jews at Celebration of Genocide Convention Passage
Armenian Catholics Celebrate Annual Mid-Lenten Dinner-Dance
Genocide Class Featured at Cal State
Competition Very Keen between Armenian Independent & Partisan Publications in Los Angeles as They Strive to Corner the Armenian Reading Market
British Library Oriental Dept. Reports on Recent Acquisitions
Thirteen Lovely Young Debutantes Take Part in St Thomas 29th Annual Cotillon & Ball, Proud Fathers Present Their Daughters to the Community Saturday April 5, 1986
Sale of Two William Saroyan Houses Upsets Many Fresnans
Keeping Their Roots Strong: Armenians Take Crash Course to Keep Language Alive
German TV Features Documentary on Turkish Massacres
Armenian Terrorists Written about in Reader's Digest: "Bomb on the loose!" Armenians Urged to Participate in Kodak's "America's Family Album"
Armenian Doctor Elected to Britain's College of Surgeons
Prelacy Ladies Gather for Elegant Mother's Day Lunch and Fashion Show at St Regis in New York City
Armenian Research Center at U. M. receives $1,000 Contribution from U.S. Senator Donald Riegle

*Letters to the Editor*
Joseph Vosbikian, a Man of Courage and Dedication
Bravo to Ara Baliozian for His Excellent Essays
Protests AGBU Fashion Show Held Near Martyr's Day
Everyone Should Pitch and Help the Mekhitarists
The People Shall Judge the Leaders

*Calendar of Events*
Violinist Gerard Kantarjian Will Perform April 27
Diocese to Mark Birth Anniversary of F. Nansen, a Friend of the Armenians
NY AGBU Golf Season to Open April 23 at Plandome Country Club
Rep. Bill Green Will Be Honored at Reception Hosted by Armenian-Americans
Fundraiser for Armenian Nursing Home Will be Held at the Copley in Boston

*Classified Ads*
Oriental Rugs
Mortgage Money Available
Funeral Directors Service—any Distance—any Hour
Chiropractor, MD, Eye Physicians, etc. Open New Offices
Armenian Restaurant
Florist
Jewel Consultant—Appraisals
Armenian Furrier
Brokerage—Apartments, Homes, Commercial
Musical Ensemble of Armenian, Arabic, Greek Music for Parties
Travel Service Offers Special Summer Tour to Armenia, Moscow, Leningrad
Piano Tuning
Books for Sale

Samples of headlines from an Armenian newspaper published in the United States suggest that the cultural and communal life of Armenian-Americans is supported by the press. There is a symbiotic relationship between the press and the organized community. Each derives benefit from the existence of the other. The voluntary associations rely upon the press to advertise the programs and events they sponsor, while the newspapers fill up their pages with reports and photographs of those activities, and sell subscriptions. The press also announces personal news of weddings, funerals, high school and college graduations, as it publicizes the successes of men and women of Armenian descent in their fields of endeavor. Most important, the Armenian press contributes to the development of Armenian pride and sense of community by highlighting the accomplishments of Armenian individuals around the world and the longevity and greatness of Armenian culture.

Noteworthy is the fact that the Armenian-American community derives glory and sense of achievement by association with prominent national or mainstream personalities. When senators, governors, or other illustrious (non-Armenian) individuals pay attention to Armenian-Americans or Armenian issues, this is perceived by the community as a sign of validation of their culture and existence. Headlines of the Armenian press reveal that the reference group of Armenian-Americans is the larger American society. I have also observed this repeatedly among the community leaders I interviewed. The younger leaders, in particular, consider it their duty to introduce the general American public to Armenian culture and history. As one of them, criticizing the established Armenian organizations, said to me, "We must look at the non-Armenian view. How can we publish and produce films to acquaint the rest of the world about our culture? So far all we've done is entertain the Armenians themselves." Another community leader, when asked whether Armenian-Americans promote their young ethnic artists, replied, "They do not know much about art. They think it's worthless unless it is accepted by the American community. The reference group is still the American society. For example, Gorky is now considered to be great."[38]

It has been established that the function of the ethnic press is to develop an ethnic ideology through the positive portrayal of the ethnic culture (Sandberg 1974, 28). For example, readers of the *Armenian Reporter* in the 1980s were encouraged to identify Armenia as a "spiritual homeland." This was done by printing news of Soviet Armenia in almost every issue, most of it being positive. Since the physical and political earthquakes in Armenia, the headlines have become bigger and bigger, and more and more pages are devoted to cover the events there. Another ideology is reinforcing a sense of diaspora. News of Armenian communities around the world appears regularly in the weekly press, stressing the cultural commonalities between the reader and his or her distant compatriot.

The newly created news magazine *Armenian International Magazine* explicitly advocates a diasporan ideology. Its timing is not only indicative of the collapse of ideological barriers between the homeland and the diaspora, but also the prominence of the Armenian-American community. Outside Armenia, this community remains the largest and most influential. Through the magazine, Armenian-

Americans have claimed a voice in the future of the Armenian people and the leadership of the expatriate communities. As an opinion maker, the magazine is most likely to propagate the views of symbolic Armenian-Americans and promote the class and political interests of its sponsors. It is therefore not surprising that the *Armenian International Magazine* is published in English, not Armenian. Indeed, English has become the *lingua franca* of the Armenian diaspora.

As with other aspects of Armenian-American communal life, several newspapers compete with each other over the ideological orientations of their sponsors and readers.[39] The focus of the Armenian press in English is very narrow. Essentially it is self-expository,[40] concentrating on Armenian news locally, nationally, and internationally. Non-Armenian news is totally excluded. The American-born generations have to rely on the American news media for national and international news and information. By contrast, the Armenian-language dailies in the past covered a broader spectrum of news and events, both Armenian and non-Armenian, because these papers were the principal source of information for the immigrant generation.[41] The new cohort of foreign-born immigrants, as reported above, are more likely to be bilingual.

How often do Armenian-Americans listen to ethnic radio? Nearly 58 percent of the New York respondents had never listened to an Armenian radio program, and another 23.4 percent have done so only rarely. Only about 6.3 percent listen to Armenian radio almost always, and 12 percent sometimes. These figures are not surprising because many respondents were ignorant of the existence of such radio programs, or did not know at what time or to which station to tune to. They wrote, "Didn't know there was one," or "Haven't known about it," or "Do not know when it's on." Alternatively, several respondents believed they were unable to receive the station. They noted, "No radio programs in our geographic area," or "Don't get any here," and again "Only because it's not available."

There were three radio programs in the New York and New Jersey metropolitan area at the time the survey was being conducted. They continue to operate today, though their schedules may have changed somewhat. These are the "Armenian Radio Hour of New Jersey" broadcasting for three hours on Sunday afternoons and another hour on Tuesday evenings; "Sound of Armenia" broadcasting Wednesday

evenings for half an hour; and "Armenian Outreach Radio Program" broadcasting on Tuesday mornings for half an hour. Each of these programs serves a specific purpose. The oldest program, "Sound of Armenia," was established in 1978 to promote the sales of an Armenian record store. It is an individualistic effort, financed by advertisements and promotional concerts by Armenian popular (semiprofessional) singers and orchestras. By contrast, the "Outreach" program broadcasts Armenian historical and cultural information and is funded by the Prelacy of the Armenian Church of America.

The most impressive program, the "Armenian Radio Hour of New Jersey," established in 1979, broadcasts news in English and Armenian. It focuses on news about Armenian individuals, communities, and issues in the United States, the diaspora, and, of course, Armenia. The station, affiliated with a local university, is federally funded, though additional support for the program comes from Armenian individuals and organizations. According to its producer, the goals of the program are to provide cultural nourishment, information, and community services to its listeners, "old-timers who are hungry for that type of programming."

In many respects, the news and information content of the Armenian radio programs has the same function as the ethnic press. The following list consists of programs of the "Armenian Radio Hour of New Jersey" as advertised in the *Armenian Reporter* in the "Calendar of Events" section during 1986. There was a program dedicated to William Saroyan, another to French (Armenian) singer Charles Aznavour, one to composer Aram Khachaturian, a program about the Armenian community in Lebanon, yet another about the One World Festival in New York City. Additionally, the program hosts, about once a month, a bilingual immigration lawyer who answers call-in queries on legal matters, and occasional guests who discuss current issues in Armenia.

Given the enormous odds against even the existence of such radio programs, the fact that they have survived for some years must be a measure of success for the producers and staff who volunteer their services. Nonetheless, such programs remain limited in achieving their goals and reaching out to any significant number of people of Armenian descent. As a sixty-three-year-old second-generation man wrote: "The Armenian Radio Hour is *not as regular* as the other

foreign radio broadcasts" (emphasis in original). Indeed, a total of five broadcasting hours per week for the Armenian community in the New York area is inconvenient, one can easily forget to tune in. A major problem is the difficulty of producing quality programming for any significant amount of time on a voluntary basis. As an elderly respondent said, he does not listen to Armenian radio, but "I would if time and place were known and convenient. Those I listened to in the past were very unprofessional, boring." It should be noted that all three producers are foreign-born, and the majority of listeners are also foreign-born.

The radio programs are a typical first-generation phenomenon common to many ethnic groups (Fishman 1985). Since the Armenian language is decreasingly used for communication, the few hours of broadcasting per week can only play a vestigial role in maintaining functional fluency of Armenian. As Armenian music and songs are less demanding, they are more likely to take over larger and larger segments of programming time in the future.

The *Armenian American Almanac* (1990) lists twenty radio programs in the United States (including the three already mentioned). Most of the major centers of Armenian communal life have a radio program. For example, there is at least one program in each of the following cities: Chicago, Cleveland, Fresno, Detroit, Houston, Philadelphia, Providence, New York, San Francisco, Watertown, Worcester,[42] and of course, Los Angeles. Most stations broadcast in Armenian and English, and feature news items and music. Typically, they go on the air for an hour or two on weekends or on weekday evenings. The one exception is the "Voice of All Armenians, Inc." Established in 1982 in Los Angeles, it is a private subscription frequency via satellite which is on the air for twenty-four hours, seven days a week.

California also boasts four Armenian television programs. Since 1979, "Armenian Teletime" can be seen on Saturday and Sunday mornings. "Horizon" was established in 1989 and provides programming for an hour on Saturday evenings. Also since 1989, "*Hye*-Air" telecasts on Mondays and Thursdays at 6:00 P.M. All three stations use KSCI-TV, channel 18, and are available to viewers in Los Angeles and occasionally in San Francisco. "The *Hye* Light" is a cable channel and is on the air on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays at

8:00 P.M. All this adds up to a token twelve or so hours of Armenian television per week. The Armenian television shows I watched while in Los Angeles consisted of news reports read by an announcer, sometimes accompanied by film clips. They covered events in the U.S. communities, the diaspora, and Armenia. Otherwise, there was much singing and musical interludes. Programing was frequently interrupted for lengthy commercials. I was told that occasionally dramatic productions or comic sketches are produced. In sum, the press, radio, and television have more or less the same content and serve the same functions.

### *Conclusion: What is Armenian-American Culture?*

Can Armenian traditional culture survive in America? That is, can the imported culture of the immigrant generation, or more accurately of succeeding immigrant cohorts, be preserved in its totality? The literature on ethnicity indicates that immigrant cultures become ossified with the passage of time unless, like the Amish and the Hasidim, the group voluntarily segregates itself from the rest of society. However, through a process of "ethnogenesis" or "ethnicization" (see chap. 1), a hyphenated culture emerges in the United States.

Richard Alba, after careful analysis of Italian Americans, concluded:

> culture is malleable, and signs of change were already visible with the emergence of the second generation. The culture of the group continued to change as its position did. The story of the Italian Americans thus testifies to endless creativity of human beings, who fashion culture in order to help make sense of the world they know and are capable of reworking it in response to changes in their surroundings. (1985a, 170-71)

Likewise, men and women of Armenian descent, in response to particular social, economic and political experiences in the United States have created the Armenian-American subculture. It is a dynamic product that adjusts to the demands of the larger society and incorporates the goals and preferences of new waves of immigrants who join the fold.

Throughout this chapter, I have argued that the debate over language hides a conflict between two definitions of Armenianness:

the traditional and the symbolic. Traditional Armenianness espouses an ascribed, compulsive type of identity and insists that the Armenian language is central to its survival. The symbolic, on the other hand, conceives of Armenianness including language proficiency as voluntary, to be enjoyed in the sidestream as along as it does not become a burden and hinder the pursuit of the American Dream. Foreign-born Armenians, especially from the Middle East, tend to defend the retention of language at all costs, while the American-born advocate individual choice in identity and community participation.

Ethnic languages fare poorly in the United States; the Armenian language is no exception. The language is the component of culture that is the least likely to be retained after the second generation. For American-born children, Armenian is not a "mother tongue." Even when 74 percent of the second generation learn to speak Armenian at home, by rote, less than 20 percent can read and write it, and, most significantly, less than 12 percent are likely to use Armenian as a means of communication at home. By the fourth generation, only a select few choose to learn to speak, read, and write Armenian. The United States is a monolingual society, and throughout its history English has been a prerequisite for economic and political integration and a chance to achieve the American Dream.

The debate over language focuses on the educational institutions as socializers of future generations. The New York data has shown that support for Armenian all-day schools comes predominantly from the post-1965 immigrant cohorts. Overall enrollment in Armenian educational institutions is very small, about 5,000 nationally. Such students represent a fraction of the universe of Armenian-American children. Even though some schools and communities have managed to prove that it is compatible to be Armenian *and* American, most of the New York sample believed that it is inconvenient and un-American to send one's child to an all-day Armenian school.

Review of two case studies of Armenian all-day schools suggests that the longer the students remain in school, the more proficient they become both in English and in Armenian. However, contrary to commonly held assumptions, these schools do not reproduce traditional Armenianness. With Armenian classes comprising less than 15 percent of instruction periods per week, American-born children get the message that their primary goal is to be successful in the larger society.

Moreover, the all-day schools propagate a symbolic Armenian culture. It is the only version that is feasible in the American environment. Yet, the all-day schools remain controversial. Middle Eastern-born parents fight for additional Armenian classes and the exclusion of non-Armenian students, while the more Americanized parents threaten to pull their children away if low grades in the Armenian language get in the way of a high grade-point average and advocate a multicultural student body that reflects American pluralism.

The Armenian radio and television programs are in the same category as the all-day schools. They cater to the Armenian-speaking immigrants who conceive of their Armenianness in traditional terms. Keeping in mind that the majority of the radio and television producers are foreign-born, as "taste-makers" they have promoted over the airwaves a type of Armenian music known as "boulevardier" or "estrada," in the style of Charles Aznavour and Julio Iglesias. It is a genre that was popularized by composers and singers in Beirut and Yerevan in the last few decades. The "estrada" style is to be contrasted to the *à la turqua* variety that Armenian communities in the United States were accustomed to. The earliest immigrants had brought to the New World their "Oriental" drums and fiddles *(davoul* and *zurna)* and the tunes and lyrics they had played and sung in their native towns and villages on the Anatolian Plateau. Paradoxically, what the recent cohort of foreign-born Armenians condemn as "Turkified" music,[43] the American-born define as "traditional" Armenian music. This has became another battleground between the two definitions of Armenianness; even though it is recognized that musical tastes are not as consequential to the well-being of individuals as all-day schools.

Since the start of the Lebanese Civil War, Los Angeles has replaced Beirut as the Mecca for Armenian popular music. There are about a dozen Middle Eastern-born "stars" who live and record in Los Angeles, but frequently tour the Armenian communities in North America to perform at concerts or dinner dances hosted by various voluntary associations. Additionally, a few of them can be seen more regularly at Middle Eastern restaurants and night clubs in Los Angeles. These "stars" sing almost exclusively in Armenian, though a couple of them have ventured into Persian, Greek, Arabic, French, Italian, and English. Their repertoire consists of old revolutionary and nationalistic songs and romantic ballads. Most borrow, even translate

songs, but some have created their own scores and lyrics. However, outside a very small circle of fans, overwhelmingly from the first generation, the names of Adis Harmandian, Pamboukian, Manuel, Vatché, Yorgantz remain unrecognizable by most Armenian-Americans.

Many second-generation Armenians active in communal life are unhappy with the new genre. One of them lamented in an Armenian newspaper: "Our dance and music, in our attempt not to be of 'Turkish' flavor, has degenerated to a point that I can no longer understand or enjoy."[44] Linguistic barriers and lack of stylistic familiarity prevent symbolic Armenian-Americans from appreciating the contemporary music produced in Yerevan or Los Angles. They are more likely to enjoy some of the bands that play live Armenian music at weddings, dinner dances, picnics, and other community gatherings. Many of these bands specialize in the "Turkified" style that is more conducive to folk dancing. Dancing is indeed more fun than listening to a song in a language one does not comprehend. One can learn the few basic steps fairly quickly; besides, one does not need a partner from the opposite sex to participate. Young and old, male and female link their hands, side by side, in a human chain and move sideways around the dance floor. There are about a dozen bands on each coast whose efforts at creating new music are insignificant. Overall, there is a limited market for these ethnic musicians; almost none of them can survive on the sale of their cassettes and live performances alone.

Nonetheless, the numbers of Armenian educational institutions, newspapers, and radio and television programs in the United States are not negligible. In a study of the community resources of ethnic languages, Fishman and his colleagues (1985, 204) found that Armenian press, radio, television, schools, and churches are proportionately overrepresented compared to other ethnic or religious groups, given the demographics of people of Armenian descent living in the United States. Fishman explains this institutional overrepresentation (in contrast to populational representation) by the ethno-religious nature of Armenian ethnicity in America as follows: "Obviously, their language institutions are maintained by multiple boundaries. But it is the *strength* of boundaries vis-à-vis mainstream society rather than their *number* that is crucial" (Fishman 1985, 269; emphasis in original). Fishman further argues that the need to teach

the liturgical/ecclesiastic language to the next generation leads organizations (including churches) to sponsor supplementary schools.

Supplementary forms of ethnic socialization such as Saturday schools, Sunday schools, summer camps, and college courses both in the United States and abroad are more acceptable. The undergraduate courses also serve as a recruiting and training ground for future leaders of the community. The chairs for Armenian studies and research centers serve somewhat different functions. As "knowledge banks" their role is to document, codify, and translate Armenian culture and history and enhance its status in the eyes of symbolic Armenian-Americans and more importantly, the Western world. Remnants of both the high culture and popular culture of the past are salvaged and lodged in museums. Family heirlooms are similarly displayed prominently in one's home. An illuminated manuscript, an ancient coin, a rug with Armenian lettering, grandmother's lace doilies, or some old photographs provide Armenian-Americans with pride and roots. Even the Armenian alphabet becomes a symbolic marker that delineates insiders from outsiders. Its original function displaced, the alphabet is more likely to be worn or hung on a wall.

Social critics have argued that in an effort to preserve the past, the Armenian cultural heritage in America is being "fixed" to traditional forms and symbols, thus excluding the possibility of change and development and failing to recognize the overwhelming majority of talented and creative Armenian-Americans. Alice Scourby, in her analysis of the Greek community in America, provides clues as to why first-generation ethnics tend to be fixated with the past. She writes: "In order to relieve the pressure of rejection and the subsequent feelings of inferiority, the immigrant overidentified with the Old World customs and traditions. The Old World's style of life became the only stabilizing pattern. Any deviations, by either himself or his children became a threat to his identity" (1980,14-15).

Ancient forms in architecture, visual arts, even crafts are repeatedly copied instead of being inspirational elements of cultural continuity in new creations. It is surmised that the Armenian-American culture, instead of being alive and vibrant, is believed to be a "dead" culture. Furthermore, it has been suggested that the Armenian-American communal structures work on the centrifugal principle, throwing out all talented, creative individuals from their core.[45] In other words, the

community holds narrow parameters of what Armenian culture entails. Artists too have said that they feel suffocated; intellectually, if they become too immersed in the community and financially, if they rely upon it for patronage. Yet, these critics are partly correct.

The devotion of the second-generation Armenian-Americans to the "Turkified" style of music is similar to their effort at preserving other aspects of their ancestral heritage in "knowledge banks." They cherish the music because they have inherited it from their parents and grandparents and because they associate it with childhood memories and warm family atmospheres. Likewise, when building an Armenian church in the United States, Armenian-Americans insist on the conical dome, the architectural trademark. In a similar vein, those who insist on traditional definitions of Armenianness tend to exclude the works of American-born authors like William Saroyan, Peter Najarian, Diana Der Hovanessian, Nancy Kricorian because they were not originally published in Armenian. They refuse to see that their spirit and the essence of their writings is Armenian.

The critics, however, seem to miss the broader picture. They tend to disregard the attractiveness of the dominant American society and its overpowering capacity to absorb talented individuals, artists, architects, musicians, among many others. Those who venture beyond the confines of the Armenian-American community have the opportunity to reap significantly greater rewards. In many respects, symbolic Armenianness encourages, even expects that leap because it is believed that the individual's success can be shared by the ethnic group, however vicariously. The Armenian-American community reclaims its sons and daughters who have "made it" in the mainstream. When Eric Boghosian's talent as a comedian became known, several voluntary associations in New York invited him to appear as a guest speaker on their programs. Similarly, when Ruth Zakarian (alias actress Devon Pierce on the soap opera "The Young and the Restless") became Miss Teen U.S.A. in 1983, she was courted by numerous Armenian organizations to appear at their banquets or dinner dances.[46]

The quantitative and qualitative data presented here demonstrate that there is a generational decrease in maintenance of traditional Armenian culture; less people read Armenian literature; buy art objects made by Armenians; and receive Armenian newspapers, magazines, and newsletters; and it is assumed that even fewer people

read such publications. They are also less likely to listen to Armenian radio, let alone attend concerts by popular Armenian singers or buy their cassettes. The art forms that use the ancestral language—poetry, fiction, nonfiction, lyrics, etc.—are most likely to become the first victims. In the final analysis, the Armenian-American community is not a speech community; if it is to survive it cannot afford to alienate those who do not speak Armenian.

## Notes

1. The poem is quoted by Nicole E. Vartanian in her article "Language as a Gift of Life," in *Armenian Reporter*, 29 November 1990, p. 4 and 6 December 1990, p. 5.
2. It should be noted that two additional letters have been added to the alphabet, totalling thirty-eight at the present time.
3. To mention but a few examples: a symposium was organized by the Bay Area Professional Society in November 1988, on "Armenian Day Schools: Prospects and Challenges" (transcripts of proceedings c/o Suzy Antounian, 2400 Broadway, San Francisco, CA 94115). A round-table was hosted by the Hairenik Association on 4 August 1990 in Watertown (proceedings published in "Armenian Day Schools: Where do We Go from Here?" *Armenian Weekly*, 18 August 1990, pp. 10-11, 14). Yet another panel discussion in Watertown was sponsored by the Tekeyan Cultural Association (in Armenian) on 26 October 1990, entitled: "The Role of Armenian Day Schools and Saturday Schools in the Preservation of Ethnicity." The Tekeyan Cultural Association also sponsored a panel discussion in New York City on 3 May 1991, entitled: "New York and New Jersey Armenian Schools: Problems and Prospects." See write up in *Armenian Reporter*, 23 May 1991, p. 7.
4. For example see "Are Armenian Schools Better?" *Armenian International Magazine* September 1990, p. 52. See also Pergrouhi Svajian, "Observations on Armenian Education — Parents and the Armenian School," *Armenian Reporter*, 6 September 1990, p. 1.
5. Being a foreign-born Armenian does not imply that one speaks, reads, and writes Armenian. There were several respondents whose ancestry was mixed. It should be noted that in certain regions of Turkey in the nineteenth century, Turkish was spoken at home. With the cultural renaissance in the latter part of the century, Armenian schools were established for boys and girls in most of the regions where Armenians lived. Thus, among the very old, it is possible to find Turkish-speaking people (sometimes exclusively so). Also the few Armenians who stayed in mainland Turkey after the Genocide had to speak Turkish to keep a low profile, and with the closing of Armenian schools their children never had a chance to learn the language of their ancestors. Many of those who had stayed behind on their ancestral lands eventually moved toward Istanbul in the 1960s and 1970s, and some of them subsequently immigrated to the United States.
6. There is a wide gap between spoken and nonspoken language retention, even among the foreign-born. Many Armenians born in Iran, Lebanon, Bulgaria,

Romania, and so on had their formal schooling in non-Armenian institutions, though at home they spoke Armenian. For example, Claudia Der-Martirosian (1989) found that among the 195 Iranian Armenian households she surveyed in Los Angeles in the late 1980s, 97 percent spoke Armenian while growing up between the ages of seven and eighteen. However, only 37 percent said they wrote Armenian most comfortably, and 21 percent said they read Armenian most often.

7. Nelson (1953), in a study of the Armenian family in Fresno (CA), found that most children raised before the 1930s spoke only Armenian before going to school.
8. See Mary Ann Aposhian. "Clinging to Ethnic Heritage in America: Study Compares Extent of Assimilation between Earlier Generation, New Arrivals." *Armenian International Magazine*, February 1991, pp. 33-36.
9. All questionnaires in the New York study were answered in English, except for four completed over the phone in Armenian.
10. Margaret Mead suggested once that Armenian be used as an international language at the United Nations (see Pattie 1990, 269 n. 9).
11. The few exceptions, whether in Cyprus, Beirut, Aleppo, or Cairo were maids or apprentices who worked for Armenians. In Fresno too, several Chinese immigrants learned Armenian when they worked for Armenian bosses in the early part of the century.
12. Nicole E. Vartanian, "Language as the Gift of Life: Keeping the Armenian Language Alive in America," *Armenian Reporter*, 29 November 1990, p. 4.
13. Such a Khatchkar rug commemorating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Genocide is being marketed for $630. It is handmade of wool, measuring 2' 6" x 4', has Armenian inscriptions (see ad in *Armenian International Magazine*, November 1990, p. 15).
14. To illustrate, *Armenian International Magazine's* November 1990 issue (p. 43) carried such ads entitled: "Armenian International Magazine Christmas Mart." Included are magic Armenian letters, [historical] map puzzle for children, durable two-sided wooden lettering blocks, and Mashtots Armenian lettering stencil. On the same page are other typically symbolic items: an Armenian cookbook, and prints of landscapes and still-life paintings of Armenian-American artist Manual Tolegian.
15. It is worth noting that it is hard to maintain a distinctive language in any diaspora. Samuelian (1986, 87) writes: "it appears that it is not much easier to maintain Armenian as a second language in the Armenian Diaspora of the Soviet Union than in the Diaspora outside of the Soviet Union."
16. During my visit to Los Angeles in April 1990, I sat in at a bilingual class at Le Conte Junior High School in Hollywood. For students with limited English proficiency even American history is taught in Armenian!
17. In the 1980s, during Ordjanian's field work (1991, 111), parents of the non-Armenian students described themselves as: English, German, Greek, (East) Indian, Italian, Irish, Native American Indian, Dutch, Polish, Scottish, Slav, or a combination of these.
18. See *Armenian Day Schools: Prospects and Challenges*, a symposium sponsored by the Bay Area Armenian Professional Society (c/o Suzy Antounian, 2400 Broadway, San Francisco, CA 94115), November 1988, p.17.
19. Arkun (1987) found that eleven full-time Armenian schools mushroomed in the

Los Angeles area in the last twenty-five years. To repeat, very little is known about the academic quality of these schools and their effectiveness in ethnicity maintenance.

20. Raffi Shoubookian, "Back to School: Caught between Rising Tuition Costs and Armenianism, Parents Face a Difficult Choice," *Armenian International Magazine*, September 1990, pp. 44-45.
21. Unpublished paper by Glendale Unified School District, Language Census Report, Spring 1990.
22. See *Journal of Armenian Studies* 2 (Spring/Summer 1985).
23. The list includes among others: NAASR (which organizes conferences, sponsors exhibits, maintains a reference and research library, offers the Armenian book clearing house, publishes popular and scholarly works, etc.); the Zoryan Institute (see chap. 2); the Center for Armenian Research and Publication at the University of Michigan, Dearborn; the Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center of the Diocese of the Armenian Church (New York).
24. There are at present eight occupied chairs for Armenian studies in the United States; one each at Harvard and Columbia, two at University of California, Los Angeles, two at University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, one at California State University, Fresno, and the most recent one at Tufts University.
25. For example, the Society for Armenian Studies is an institutional member of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA). It sponsors several panels at MESA annual conferences. It publishes a newsletter (semi-annually) and the award-winning *Journal of the Society of Armenian Studies* (annually) with a circulation of 500 each. Its 1991 "Roster of Members" lists 191 entries, though according to Richard G. Havannisian, in his Chairman's Midyear Report (30 July 1991) only 125 have paid dues ($25 per year) and are in good standing.
26. Intensive summer courses (five levels of competency) are offered at the University of Venice and taught by Mekhitarist fathers from their nearby monastery at St. Lazaro. See *NAASR Newsletter* 7, 1-2 (Winter/Spring 1991): 6.
27. Yerevan Summer Institute is administered by the University of Michigan Armenian Studies Program and sponsored by AGBU. Students meet four hours a day, five days a week to earn eight credits. They also get the chance to discover Armenia. As one student who participated in the program in 1990 said: "The Institute provides an opportunity to become skilled in speaking, reading, and writing Armenian in a relatively short time, and to sample the richness of all aspects of Armenian culture — its art, religion, history, music, dance and more" ("Yerevan Institute Offers Language Study and More to 17 Students," *News from AGBU, Armenia-Aid*, February 1991, p.8; see also "AGBU Language Instruction Program in Yerevan," *Armenian Reporter*, 8 September 1988).
28. For example see "ACYOA Armenian Summer Studies Program," *Armenian Church* 2, 7 (August 1988). Another program was sponsored by AREC and held at the campus of the University of Hartford (CT), see "Armenian Summer Language Intensive For Teens Concludes," *Armenian Reporter*, 20 September 1990, p. 7. The Mekhitarist fathers have initiated a month-long summer Armenology course in Los Angeles. Classes include "language instruction in Classical Armenian as well as Modern, History of the Armenian People, History of Armenian Art, Communities, Commerce, Philosophy, Theater, Medicine, Monarchism, Spirituality, Church Liturgy, Canon Law, etc." (*Armenian Reporter*, 16 May 1991, p. 13).

29. The Siamanto Academy established in 1980, sponsored by the Armenian Religious Educational Council of the Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church (AREC) and the Armenian Relief Society is designed to prepare future leaders for the community. Highly motivated and academically successful high school students take courses in Armenian language, history, literature, etc. The program is accredited as a college-level course in a number of universities and colleges in the United States. Upon graduation, students are eligible for six credits in history and three in literature. In 1990 the program had twenty-six students. Moreover, a preparatory division was instituted recently for junior high school students (see the *Armenian Reporter*, 13 September 1990, p. 5).
30. This organization has been in existence in the United States since 1986. It started as a modest grass-roots experiment in France in 1978. Young Armenian-American men and women have already completed the restoration of an old church in Kessab, Syria. Since the earthquake, they have been working on projects in Armenia. See full-page advertisement in *Armenian International Magazine*, February 1991, p. 23.
31. Project SAVE is yet another example of a knowledge bank. It is a photographic archive on Armenian life. It was started in the mid-1970s by Ruth Thomasian in Watertown (MA). Its mission is "to collect and document photographs of people and places in Historic Armenia and the diaspora. . . . Project SAVE has become a facilitator in connecting generations. Older Armenian-Americans have the chance to verbalize their past as well as preserve it visually with their photographs, and younger generations now have access to this source of information about their background. In a society with such ethnic and cultural diversity, it is extremely important for people to understand their own heritage" (from Project SAVE 1991 Calendar).
32. It is noteworthy that after 1928 all Armenian weddings in Fresno were preceded by a shower (Nelson 1953, 201).
33. Reading about traditional wedding ceremonies seems foreign and strange to most Armenians today. For example, see Fr. Arten Ashjian, "Armenian Weddings of Bygone Days," *Armenian Reporter*, 31 October 1985, p. 3.
34. See Lemyel Amirian, "Notes in Transit: Armenian Hospitality," *Armenian Reporter*, 7 August 1986, p. 2. The writer notes that traditionally, for Armenians, hospitality was paramount. The term "a guest is a king in my house" was used to describe this value. By contrast, he continues; "the Americanized or Europeanized Armenians won't ask you to their home . . . for fear they'll have to offer you a glass of water."
35. One of my interviewees suggested the word *namous* for family honor. The term was coined for a novel by A. Shirvanzade (1858-1935), a Caucasian-Armenian literary figure, which he himself borrowed from Arabic and Turkish. In 1925, the popular novel was adapted by Bek-Nazarian to the cinema. The movie was entitled: *Namous*. Mouradian (1990, 45, 57) argues that the Soviet system used cinema to preach modernism and denounce the excesses of the patriarchal family. It is the story of a young potter who is promised to the daughter of the tailor. Discovering that the young lovers are impatient, the tailor gives his daughter to the merchant Rostom. The latter, upon finding out the real story, kills the young woman; and the potter commits suicide. Interestingly, the audiences did not react to the film in the way that the Soviet authorities had expected. Instead of denigrating the cruel customs of the past, they felt very proud. The film

represented their own lives. The issue here is, to what extent does the concept of family honor prevail in the Armenian community of the United States at present? Murder and suicide are highly unlikely to ensue from premarital relations these days. However, the double standard of morality that condones sexual permissiveness in males, and condemns it in females still lingers on.

36. One of the dailies is *Hairenik*, the longest running Armenian language paper in the United States. The other is *Asbarez*, a bilingual paper established in Fresno in 1908, but now operating out of Los Angeles.
37. These are (in alphabetical order): (1) *Baikar* - weekly (Ramgavar party) published in Watertown since 1922; (2) *Eritassard Hayastan* - monthly (Hunchag party) published in Paramus (NJ) since 1903 with a circulation of 1,000; (3) *Hairenik* - daily (Tashnag party) published since 1899 in Watertown with a circulation of 2,000; (4) *Massis* - weekly (Hunchag party) published in Pasadena with a circulation of 1,000; (5) *Nor Or* - biweekly (Ramgavar party) published since 1922 in Altadena with a circulation of 2,500. The only nonpartisan Armenian language paper is *Paros*, a biweekly established in 1984 in North Hollywood. The political parties also have their English-language weekly newspapers: The *Armenian Mirror Spectator* (Ramgavar) published since 1932 in Watertown; and the *Armenian Weekly* (Tashnag) published since 1933 also in Watertown.
38. Anecdotally, I was told that Arshile Gorky once gave one of his paintings to an Armenian charity in Massachusetts. It was auctioned at $7.50, much to Gorky's outrage.
39. For example see the *Armenian Reporter*, 10 April 1986, pp. 18-19; and article by Larry Gordon of the *Los Angeles Times* reprinted in the *Armenian Reporter*, 28 August 1986, "Legal Dispute and Competition between Two Armenian Language Weeklies Draws Attention of Local American Press." For parallels with the Polish community in America see Sandberg (1974, 28).
40. The Armenian press is also self-serving and not a "free press." The political and ideological leanings of a given paper seem to make it color-blind to the weaknesses and faults of its leadership, organizations, and membership. One critic has likened this to the *Washington Post* reporting information by publishing the press releases of the White House or other federal agencies. This lack of reliability and intellectual integrity of the Armenian press is a consequence of the chauvinism and parochialism of communal life. See Jack Antreassian, "The Community and You," *Armenian Church*, 4, 5 (May 1990) and 4, 6 (June 1990); and "Armenian Print Media: A Blessing and an Embarrassment," *Armenian International Magazine*, November 1990, p. 52.
41. Personal communication with Gerard Libaridian, director of The Zoryan Institute for Contemporary Armenian Research and Documentation, Inc., Cambridge (MA). See also Moskos (1989, 80) for similarities with Greek press.
42. The May 1991 issue of *Armenian International Magazine* reports (p. 23) that since July 1986, Worcester has an "Armenian Heritage Program." It airs on Sundays between nine and eleven in the evening. Its producer is also foreign-born.
43. Indeed, it is hard to define what "pure" Armenian music is, or should be, when Armenian culture was influenced by 400 years of Ottoman subjugation. Politically conscious and nationalist elements in Soviet Armenia and the diaspora have tried to "clean" Armenian music of Turkish influence, the same way the

nineteenth-century Armenian literary and cultural renaissance established schools, published books, etc., teaching to a new generation their "mother tongue" as their parents spoke predominantly Turkish. As the Republic of Armenia becomes the center for diasporan life and culture, it is expected that it will have a stronger voice in deciding what type of music will be produced. However, in the United States, Armenian-Americans will reserve the right to choose what is best suited for them.

44. See "An Ongoing Debate: What is the Authentic Music, Dancing?" *Armenian Reporter*, 15 January 1987, p. 3.
45. The analogy of the centrifugal system was discussed by Gerard Libaridian at a seminar sponsored by The Zoryan Institute in their Open University Seminar series, on 21 March 1987 at Columbia University, New York.
46. See *Armenian International Magazine*, June 1991, pp. 30-31.

# 5

# Sources of Identity

It is the contention of this study that the assimilation of Armenian immigrants in the United States proceeds hand in hand with changes in the nature of Armenianness. Behavioral and attitudinal changes characterize the transition from traditional to symbolic Armenianness. The evidence presented in the previous chapters demonstrates that with later generational status, with mixed ancestry, with non-Armenian religious affiliation men and women of Armenian descent in the United States are less and less likely to speak the ancestral language, attend services in their grandparents' church, participate in communally hosted programs and activities, become members of voluntary associations, and find ethnic politics very meaningful. Yet repeatedly, the data also showed that identification, sense of peoplehood, and pride in one's ancestral roots do not wane with the passage of generations, intermarriage, and religious conversion as quickly as other aspects of traditional Armenianness. What explains these differences? I argue that while the behavioral components of Armenianness are typical of the traditional form, the emotional components exemplify, *par excel-*

*lence*, the symbolic. Here, I explore sources that nourish, replenish, and energize Armenian identity in the United States.

## The Making of Hyphenated Americans

When immigrant groups settle in America, the world they had taken for granted is shattered. Their new neighbors and hosts question their identity. "Who are you?" they ask. The self-identification labels they had used prior to immigration are often irrelevant in their new environment. They have to redefine themselves by new self-placement tags. For this, they need to use categories that are readily understood in their host society over and above those that reflect their place of origin and historical roots. Through this process of self-identification, immigrant groups become "ethnics" or hyphenated Americans (Greeley 1974, 301-2). In the United States, this dual identity is not denied, but encouraged (De Vos and Romanucci-Ross 1982, 378). Initially, processes of ethnicization take place alongside processes of acculturation. For example, post-1965 Armenian immigrants from Romania had to get accustomed to the already existing Armenian community that welcomed them upon their arrival and identify themselves as Armenian-Americans. All along, they had to adjust to the larger American society and learn to function effectively in its economic, political, and social systems.

In the long run, the straight-line assimilation theory posits that following cultural, structural, and marital assimilation, the ethnic component of self-identity will be relinquished. That is achieved when an individual develops a "sense of peoplehood based exclusively on host society" (Gordon 1964, 71; see also Shibutani and Kwan 1965, 479, 505). It is important to distinguish between individual and group changes in ethnic identity. Some individuals may identify themselves as "American" as early as the first generation. However, it takes a group several generations for the majority of its members to identity themselves as American. Estimating the number of generations necessary for a group to be fully assimilated is a tricky issue. As discussed in chapter 1, several variables related to the internal dynamics of the group and the external environment influence the outcome. Some groups may be arrested or almost arrested at the symbolic phase forever. A few groups, like the Hasidim, remain traditional by choice.

Ethnic identity is an extension of Cooley's concept of "looking glass self." The self is a social product. It is a subjective consciousness developed during early socialization as the child realizes a sense of "I /Me" in contrast to others. Initially, the child acquires this sense of self through imitation and role-playing. Positive evaluation and feedback of his/her behavior by significant others are reflected back through verbal and nonverbal cues. These result in a strong sense of self and feelings of pride. Neglect or negative sanctions, on the other hand, produce feelings of self-mortification. Next, the child takes the roles of generalized others; the notion of self is expanded to include a collectivity. We-feelings are likewise nurtured by comparison to an out-group. The "I/We" is rooted in the past, connected to the individual's and group's history (Cooley 1983).

The social self is a dynamic and flexible mechanism. It is transformed or transmuted contingent on its real or fantasized reference groups. Moreover, the image of self that is projected to others is negotiated and achieved by impression management. Individuals inhabit a multiplicity of social worlds separated by cognitive boundaries, each world having its own rules and communication channels. An ethnic environment is one of several past-oriented[1] social worlds that people may occupy. Citizenship in a political state, membership in a religious congregation, affiliations to professional or occupational groups and class loyalties are some of the other social worlds people have access to.

Ethnic identity is buttressed by two principles that legitimize a sense of belonging to a social entity (De Vos and Romanucci-Ross 1982, 364-71). First, are myths of origin, traditions that provide a scripted continuity between the past and the future. Through one's parents, individuals trace their genealogy and bind the generations to a common ancestor. Shared origins of a collectivity establish an individual's rights and responsibilities toward the group, direct one's loyalties and affections to the in-group, and vent one's aggression to the out-group. In essence, ethnic identity is a kind of moral commitment to "personal survival in the historical continuity of the group" (De Vos and Romanucci-Ross 1982, 17). Second, ethnic identity specifies rules of comportment. It highlights the behavior of insiders in contrast to that of outsiders. Group expectations reinforce "correct" behavior by social sanctions that reward those who comply

and punish, even ostracize, those who deviate from the norms. Ideally, recruitment to an ethnic group is by birth *and* socialization; however, one aspect may be emphasized more than the other at different times and in different places in a group's history. Criteria that determine exclusion or inclusion in an ethnic group are altered by expanding or restricting ethnic boundaries. For example, ethnic identity may be inherited bilineally or unilineally.[2] Code of conduct may be demanding and strictly sanctioned or it may be fluid and enforcement lax, allowing for greater compliance or variation in behavior.

In the United States, immigrants, their children, and grandchildren have a choice in their presentation of self from a range of identities; at one end is traditional identity, at the other "American" identity, and in between are hyphenated combinations. Traditional ethnic identity is qualitatively different from that of later-generation hyphenated identities. I hypothesize that traditional ethnic identity tends to be more salient or central to one's concept of self. It permeates most of the roles one routinely engages in during the course of one's daily life. Furthermore, one's role attachment to being ethnic or one's emotional involvement in ethnicity tends to be stronger. Because the "stakes" are higher, the individual is more likely to be more committed to his/her ethnic background. In other words, traditional ethnic identity is a master status; it is at the core of one's economic, social, and even physical survival as an individual.

In the United States of America, membership in ethnic groups is optional, and group boundaries are permeable (mostly outwards). Ethnic identity is achieved in competition (or through lack of it) with other interests and allegiances in people's lives. In contrast to traditional ethnic identity, symbolic identity tends to be less central to one's conception of self. Symbolic or emblematic identity is described with malleable "ego boundaries" adaptable to almost any situation or context (Barth 1969). It is activated or muted, expanded or contracted, both collectively and individually, whenever the situation or interpersonal encounter warrants one or the other reaction. "Passing" behavior, identity switching, alter-casting,[3] maintaining a facade, name changes are part of the vocabulary of adaptive, contextual ethnicity.

Opportunities for manipulating ethnic identities are not infinite. According to Lyman and Douglas (1973, 351-54) there are five kinds

of structural and personal constraints on ethnic impression management. First, inasmuch as skin color cannot be changed and accents are hard to lose, there are limits on "passing" behavior. Second, ethnicity is not the only aspect of self. In certain situations ethnicity is irrelevant, or subordinate to other attributes of self. At times, one's gender identity or socioeconomic status may be more significant. Third, because of differentiation, compartmentalization, and specificity in modern life, individuals do not have to project a coherent image of themselves at all times. Inconsistencies in identity and behavior allow actors to portray one aspect of self to one audience without jeopardizing another. Fourth, in plural societies ignorance, stereotyping, and restrictive repertoires about other ethnic groups and the host society are common. Ethnic (minority) groups are at a disadvantage because their early socialization does not equip them with a thorough knowledge of the dominant culture, or other ethnic groups for that matter. Thus, they are unable to manipulate identities to maximize their gains. Finally, individual actors may lack the skills or mental requisites to enact a presentation of self different from the one they were socialized into.

The development of Armenian-American identity follows the same processes. First, one can be an Armenian by nature, substance, genealogy, or blood; that is, one is born *Hye* (term used by insiders for Armenian) in opposition to *odar* (foreigner, outsider); *Hye* and *odar* being two mutually exclusive terms. Second, one can be an Armenian by following a code of behavior; by learning and using the Armenian language; attending Armenian church; caring for family members; or sharing common sentiments such as the importance of the family, homeland, and hatred of the Turks. In her analysis of Armenian-Americans in Washington, DC, O'Grady argues that the community perceives intermarriage as inevitable and the Armenian "substance" endangered by dilution. Therefore, she says, the community is trying to expand and alter the rules of relevance of who is entitled to be an Armenian (O'Grady 1979, 119-123).

The emphasis is shifting from concepts of origin to a code of conduct. That is, non-Armenian spouses are being increasingly welcomed into the community. Moreover, tracing descent bilineally is becoming more and more acceptable. For example, children of mixed ancestry are awarded scholarships and other grants irrespective of

whether the father or mother is of Armenian descent. Traditionally, Armenians traced descent patrilineally, and the few non-Armenian wives who married into the Armenian community remained *odars* even though they had to be resocialized into the husband's culture. They had to learn the language, the norms and values, and the small and great traditions alike. On the other hand, if on rare occasions an Armenian woman married outside her congenital community, she was considered lost.

Demographically, the proportion of people who are one-half, one-fourth, one-eighth, or one-sixteenth Armenian will increase exponentially to become eventually a majority of the universe of people of Armenian descent in America. Definitions of Armenianness cannot but be set in very flexible terms; descent will have to be bilineal and code of conduct very fluid. At the collective level, whoever defines Armenianness will have to accept an emblematic identity with a multitude of individualistic interpretations and expressions. Empirical evidence suggests that white ethnic communities in the United States such as the Jews, Greeks, and Italians more and more are accepting intermarried people in their midst. Despite O'Grady's observations above, I find Armenian-Americans have been slower to follow suit. Because of the large influx of new immigrants in recent decades, Armenian institutional structures have, as yet, not felt the void left by the alienation of the intermarried and the assimilated from the community.

Individuals who are not Armenian by blood or marriage are not considered for recruitment into the Armenian Apostolic church or the institutionalized community. One hears occasionally of complete outsiders who became members of the Armenian Apostolic church. Aharonian (1983) mentions such an example and suggests that church doors be opened to all people who want to join, irrespective of descent or marital ties. Recently, another example appeared in the ethnic press. David Luhrssen, a non-Armenian by blood or marriage, had written a short essay explaining why he became a member of St John the Baptist Armenian Church of Greenfield (WI).[4] These are truly rare examples. My interviews with clerics and community leaders suggest that neither the church nor the community, at the present time, are considering the inclusion of *odars* as a technique for increasing the church's congregation. Public debates in Armenian newspapers over

the controversial presidency of a non-Armenian spouse as head of the largest Armenian philanthropic organization in America illustrate that even the acceptance of *odar* spouses in influential leadership positions is still not totally acceptable.[5]

### *Self-identification of New York Respondents*

New York respondents were asked: "How do you think of yourself?" Surprisingly only 8.4 percent of the sample said they were "American"[6] 18 percent said they were "Armenian" and the rest gave hyphenated labels to identify themselves. The majority of the sample (64.3 percent) were "American-Armenians" (N = 583). This figure includes 3.1 percent who said they were "Armenian-Americans" and a very small proportion of respondents (.9 percent) who said they were of Armenian descent. I have used the title "Diaspora-Armenians" to describe 9.3 percent of the sample who as foreign-born respondents continued to identify with their place of birth. Diaspora-Armenians include Istanbul/Turkish-Armenians (2.6 percent), Iranian-Armenians (2.1 percent), Lebanese-Armenians (2.1 percent), Syrian-Armenians (.5 percent), French-Armenians (.5 percent), Bulgarian-Armenians (.3 percent), Jerusalem-Armenians (.3 percent), Soviet-Armenians (.3 percent), Latin American-Armenians (.3 percent), and Egyptian-Armenians (.2 percent). It should be noted that even those who identified themselves as American did not deny their Armenian roots

**TABLE 5.1**
**Frequency Distribution of Self-Described Identity by Generation**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 583 | (219) | (272) | (36) | (40) | (16) |
| Armenian | 37.0 | 5.9 | 13.9 | 5.0 | 6.3 |
| Armenian-American | 38.4 | 82.7 | 72.2 | 72.5 | 68.8 |
| Diasporan-Armenian | 22.4 | 1.8 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| American | 2.3 | 9.6 | 13.9 | 22.5 | 25.0 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

because participation in this study automatically assumed that respondents recognized their Armenian descent.

Even though with each passing generation there is a straight-line increase in the proportion of people who identify as American, the association between generation and identity is not statistically very significant (see table 5.1). Approximately, 70 percent of third- and later-generation respondents continue to identify as Armenian-Americans. On the other hand, ancestry and religious affiliation were somewhat more significantly related to self-described identity (tau c .10* for both). Mixed ancestry increases seven times the number of those who identify as American (5 percent versus 35 percent for those with one Armenian parent; see table 5.2). Those with "other" and no religion were least likely to say they were Armenian, and most likely to say they were American (see table 5.3). Yet, about 65 percent of

TABLE 5.2
**Frequency Distribution of Self-Described Identity by Ancestry**

| | Both Parents Armenian | One Parent Armenian |
|---|---|---|
| N = 583 | (517) | (66) |
| Armenian | 18.8 | 12.1 |
| Armenian-American | 66.7 | 45.5 |
| Diasporan-Armenian | 9.5 | 7.6 |
| American | 5.0 | 34.8 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 |

TABLE 5.3
**Frequency Distribution of Self-Described Identity by Religious Affiliation**

| | Apostolic Armenian | Protestant Armenian | Catholic Armenian | Other (Non-Arm.) | No Religion |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 575 | (370) | (56) | (22) | (92) | (35) |
| Armenian | 21.4 | 19.6 | 13.6 | 7.6 | 5.7 |
| Armenian-American | 65.1 | 62.5 | 59.1 | 66.3 | 65.7 |
| Diasporan-Armenian | 10.3 | 8.9 | 22.7 | 3.3 | 5.7 |
| American | 3.2 | 8.9 | 4.5 | 22.8 | 22.9 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

those with mixed ancestry and nonethnic religious persuasions continue to identify as Armenians or hyphenated Armenians.

Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with the statement: "You can be for your own people first and still be a good American." This view was most significantly associated with sympathy to ethnic politics, religious affiliation, and generational status (.11* for all three). Those who were indifferent to Armenian political parties and ideologies (see table 5.4), and those who had no religion and "other" religions (see table 5.5) were least likely to agree that people can have dual identities and allegiances. First- and second-generation respondents tended to agree somewhat more that a person could be a good Armenian and a good American (see table 5.6). Again, the overall differences were minor. The question is: Why does Armenian identity defy the theoretical assumptions of Milton Gordon and others? How can these results be interpreted?

### *Reasons for Persistence of Ethnic Identity*

The results of the New York sample are corroborated with other studies.[7] In a study of ethnic identification using national samples of native-born whites, Alba and Chamlin (1983) found that contrary to common assumptions, ethnic identification remained relatively high with generation, age, higher educational status, and mixed ancestry. They further observed that people with mixed parentage have a tendency to identify with one group. Younger people, those with college education, and those living in large urban settings, show

**TABLE 5.4**
**Frequency Distribution of Attitude Statement: "You Can Be for Your Own People First and Still Be a Good American" by Sympathy to Ethnic Politics**

| | Anti-Tashnag | Tashnag | Neutral | Indifferent | Rejects Parties |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 523 | (32) | (109) | (141) | (173) | (68) |
| Agree | 96.9 | 82.6 | 85.8 | 61.8 | 66.2 |
| No opinion | 0.0 | 2.8 | 2.8 | 11.6 | 4.4 |
| Disagree | 3.1 | 14.7 | 11.3 | 26.6 | 29.4 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

surprising rates of identification with one background in spite of their mixed or ambiguous ancestry. This phenomenon is likewise typified by the comments of one of the New York respondents; a thirty-four-year-old, fourth-generation woman whose father is Armenian-Assyrian and mother German-English, who wrote: "I am only 1/4 Armenian, however I do tend to identify myself as an Armenian-American." Alba and Chamlin explain, "ethnic identifications remain salient in an era when increasing numbers of Americans have mixed ancestry (and many others have intermarried). In part, ethnic identification may remain an issue, even for the socially assimilated, insofar as ethnic differentiation remains a prominent axis of social life" (1983, 246).

Another survey conducted in Boston and Kansas City found that most people could trace their ancestry back several generations; however, Catholics, those from lower classes, and those living in lower-status neighborhoods were most likely to identify as "all-around Americans" (Barthel 1978, 105). Many of those reluctant to specify an ethnic group, felt no pride in their background and uncomfortable with fellow ethnics. The dilemma in reconciling assimilation with ethnic identity and continuity is resolved with the allocating of the latter to the sidestream. Respondents in Boston and Kansas City overwhelmingly advocated the Melting Pot ideology, equating Americanism with melting to become better, stronger, united, less prejudiced. They felt that ethnic groups "should 'mix' yet retain a sense of their own background and a respect for that of others" (Barthel 1978, 101). The author goes on to say:

**TABLE 5.5**
**Frequency Distribution of Attitude Statement: "You Can Be for Your Own People First and Still Be a Good American" by Religious Affiliation**

| | Anti-Tashnag | Tashnag | Neutral | Indifferent | Rejects Parties |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 565 | (364) | (55) | (22) | (89) | (35) |
| Agree | 81.3 | 76.4 | 81.8 | 64.0 | 51.4 |
| No opinion | 4.1 | 5.5 | 9.1 | 9.0 | 11.4 |
| Disagree | 14.6 | 18.2 | 9.1 | 27.0 | 37.1 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

> Ethnic groups are taken as "good" for the individual, insofar as the identities they provide yield a certain sense of belonging and heritage. They are "good" for the country, insofar as they remain to remind us that we are a "nation of nations"—they are what has made America unique. Yet, they lead to prejudice and limit individual expression, and "bad" for the nation when they stress loyalty to the group and to what it can get from the system rather than stressing working together as Americans. In sum, we find a solid level of support for the melting pot ideology and a distrust for any social movement or philosophy that could lead to an intensification of ethnic group identification. (Barthel 1978, 108)

What explains the durability of identification with one ethnic group? The results of the New York study have repeatedly demonstrated that there is no real revival in behavioral forms, as they amply illustrate that symbolic Armenianness is most acceptable in the sidestream. Armenians, like the majority of the white immigrant groups that arrived to the United States at the turn of the century, are no longer poor, barely literate peasants. They no longer live in inner-city ghettos, occupy working-class positions, and feel politically insecure. Additionally, the post-World War II immigrants have not significantly set back the progress already achieved by their predecessors. It is too early to tell what the most recent refugees from Soviet Armenia will do. Therefore, men and women of Armenian descent are not likely to deny their identity nowadays. Armenianness is easier, safer, and more attractive than in the early part of this century. Empirical evidence from other studies concurs that ethnic identity is stronger among groups that are sufficiently secure in their socioeconomic position, with still relatively low proportions of intermarried (such as the Armenians). Economically comfortable

**TABLE 5.6**
**Frequency Distribution of Attitude Statement: "You Can Be for Your Own People First and Still Be a Good American" by Generation**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 572 | (214) | (265) | (36) | (41) | (16) |
| Agree | 84.1 | 74.0 | 50.0 | 70.7 | 68.8 |
| No opinion | 3.3 | 6.4 | 8.3 | 7.3 | 18.8 |
| Disagree | 12.6 | 19.6 | 41.7 | 22.0 | 12.5 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

ethnic groups have the best of both worlds; they "enjoy the folkloric aspect of ethnicity while protecting against its more negative aspects" (Barthel 1978, 110).

What are the functions of ethnic identity for later generations? A study of seven groups in Winnipeg, Canada, suggests that people have a psychosocial need to identify with either their ethnic group or the host society, depending on whether they are from a minority or a majority group. Positive, sufficiently dynamic historical and cultural experiences will produce a well-rounded concept of self, while their absence (e.g., lack of institutional completeness for some ethnic groups) will lead to feelings of inferiority, of being restricted, of annoyance, discomfort, and a general sense of marginality (Driedger 1976). De Vos and Romanucci-Ross provide another explanation for identification with one ethnic background for individuals with mixed ancestry. They suggest that such people often choose the more exotic background in lieu of the host society's because

> this type of identity decision refers to the issues about a contemporary democratic sense of integrity reflected in a felt necessity to affirm rather than deny the less prestigious segment of one's ancestry. This sense of integrity runs counter to previous patterns which emphasized identification with one's more socially elevated ancestors—a common mode of tracing genealogies practiced in aristocratically oriented societies. (De Vos and Romanucci-Ross 1982, 378)

A recent study corroborates that individuals of mixed ancestries, sometimes having as many as eight ancestries, choose from their background the one ethnicity that is the most unusual or interesting. This gives them a chance to stand out in a crowd, to feel one in a thousand (Waters 1990, 154). Men and women with only one Armenian grandparent are in a similar position.

Armenian identity provides the descendants of the original immigrants the chance to feel affiliated with a smaller, often historically older, and culturally richer collectivity. In a way, it provides relief from the homogenizing forces of modern American society and the anonymity of the metropolis. Ethnicity adds "spice," "fun" and "color" to a "bland post-industrial existence" (Barthel 1978, 111). It also offers the opportunity for bonding with ready-made allies in instrumental and expressive encounters.[8] "It gives a sense of heritage and roots to a highly mobile population" (Barthel 1978, 111).

To illustrate how an individual's instrumental and expressive

interpersonal relations with fellow ethnics is important in fostering confidence and goodwill or denial and marginality, here are the comments of two of the New York respondents. A thirty-year-old woman, who like her father is U.S.-born, in her anger and disappointment at the Armenian church and clergy regarding her marriage to a non-Armenian, said: "I am sick and tired of calling myself an Armenian, when in fact, I am but an *American* with Armenian roots." On the other hand, in spite of her identification as an American, another respondent, also female, similar in age and generational status wrote:

> I feel a strong connection to being Armenian, but it is not reflective of my responses on this survey. I feel it in my *spirit* and responses to the world around me. This is possibly because the richness culturally that I was exposed to as a child. I like being Armenian and have never received anything but positive reaction and reinforcement from people about it.
>
> I am not religious and do not seek out Armenians in the course of life, [but] I am interested in them and feel a trust and bond more easily. (Emphasis in original)

In addition to all the reasons already mentioned for identifying with an ethnic group in America, essentially beyond the third generation, insiders have suggested that unlike other white ethnic groups, people of Armenian descent have special reasons to hang onto their historical definition of self. Armenians as a nation managed to survive for thousands of years; they survived wars, famines, occupations, persecutions, deportations, a multitude of invaders. To culminate this turbulent history, they survived the Genocide at the hands of the Young Turk government at the turn of this century. It would therefore be a grave injustice to the past, if the continuity of this unique cultural heritage were terminated at this time of ease and opulence and in this country of opportunities. Furthermore, insiders argue that the precarious situation of the historical Armenian homeland, part of it in Turkish hands, and the other trying to achieve full independence from Soviet domination, places more responsibility on the Armenians of the diaspora to perpetuate the culture. I have heard several young, later-generation Armenian-Americans say that there is too much to give up: culture, history, the church. They would feel guilty in facing history if they severed the link with the past out of negligence. Rather, they feel it is their responsibility to impart this heritage to the next generation.[9]

How prevalent is this rationale among the Armenian-American population? It is hard to say; however, judging from the results of the New York study, this notion cannot be very popular or widespread.

In any case, there is a need for further research, especially among the intermarried and their children, for a better understanding of the intensity and forms of Armenian identity. Erikson, who was the first person to popularize the notion of identity, had similar thoughts several decades ago. He wrote: "[W]e begin to conceptualize matters of identity at the very time in history when they become a problem. For we do so as a country which attempts to make a super-identity out of all the identities imported by its constituent immigrants; and we do so at a time when rapidly increasing mechanization threatens these ... identities" (Erikson 1963, 285).

*Qualitative Evidence*

New York respondents wrote about the intensity of their Armenian identity and the forms it took. For example, three respondents (first and second generation) said they were "100 percent Armenian." While another wrote: "I am not an outwardly staunch Armenian, but I am Armenian—Westernized and well-educated" (professional male forty-seven, born in Iran, immigrated at age ten). Another forty-three-year-old woman (respondent and mother U.S.-born, married to a non-Armenian) said, "I've always been proud of my heritage and although I have not followed a strict Armenian upbringing in the rearing of my children, I have instilled in them, I believe, a sense of pride in the fact that they are *half* Armenian."

Two kinds of qualifiers were used by the respondents to describe their ties or connection to their ancestral culture and group. Some were mathematical concepts such as percentages or fractions, others were simple adjectives (staunch, strict). These subjective measures may or may not be matched by objective criteria. Similar to self-placements in social class terms, people's subjective perceptions about Armenianness are important inasmuch as they guide behavior.

Respondents wrote profusely about their identity. There were two common themes they reiterated, over and over again. First, they were immensely proud to be of Armenian descent. Second, they were overwhelmingly grateful to the United States of America. I begin with

people's pride in their roots, in their ancestors. This was elicited directly from the love and respect they felt for their parents and grandparents. Here are some of their comments:

> I'm proud of my parents and of being *Armenian!!* (female fifty-eight, second generation).

> Our parents were proud of being Armenian and taught us to be proud of our heritage (female thirty, third generation).

> As an American Armenian I have always felt very proud to repeat time and time again that I am an Armenian and in as much as I would have been very proud to marry one, being raised to believe that [as] Armenians, male or female, you also come first—type attitude prevailed through all our acquaintances of Armenian background. My grandparents, I am glad to say, left for me everything anyone could want, pride, joy and happiness. They all were victims in some form or fashion of the genocide.... May Armenians always be proud to say YES HYE EM! [I am Armenian] (female thirty-three, respondent and both parents U.S.-born).

> I am proud to be an Armenian in America. I have raised my children in America and proud that I have raised them as Armenian speaking Armenians. And I have raised them with a religious background (male seventy-two, born Baghdad, came to the United States at age six).

> We are Armenians and proud of our ethnicity (male eighty-three, born in Turkey, lived in Romania, came to America at age sixty-eight).

Even though the majority of the respondents claimed dual identity, the foreign-born were more likely to emphasize the Armenian part. On the other hand, the American-born stressed the American part. Irrespective of generation, respondents spared no words in praise of America. To illustrate, I quote:

> I am an American—but also proud to be Armenian (female thirty-three, fourth generation).

> I am very happy to have been born a United States citizen, but I am very proud of my Armenian heritage (female sixty-five, second generation).

> We love Armenians, and we are very proud of our heritage, but we must never forget we are Americans (male forty-six, respondent and mother U.S.-born).

> Armenian-American, since the Armenian part came first (1909) and the Americanization followed (1921). I have never liked the use of the hyphen. It fractures both identity and unity (male, born Greece).

> I am proud to be an Armenian but I also love my adopted country, USA (male seventy-seven, born Soviet Armenia, came age forty-one).

> We should remember and act Armenian but never forget that we are blessed by being Americans (male seventy-six, born Turkey, came age twenty-six).
>
> I am very proud of being Armenian.... God Bless America. American first, Armenian second, but both are second to none (female forty-nine, second generation).
>
> I am a first generation American Armenian *[sic.]*. All my early friends were sons of Irish, Italian, Jewish, German etc immigrants. Our household was Armenian in language and food but in every other way we were American and greatly proud of it. We were also fiercely proud of our Armenian blood. Best of both worlds. Always found nothing but high regard and respect for Armenians (male sixty, second generation).
>
> Even though I have never hid my Armenian origins, I have been always proud to be one; I am an American by choice. I respect this country and feel it as my own. My loyalties are to the U.S.A. (male forty-one, born in Romania, came age twenty-one).
>
> I am forever grateful to the U.S. for the safe haven it has provided my family and truly it has been a land of opportunity (female age eighty-five, born Turkey arrived at age seventeen).

The hypotheses of this study are supported by the comments above. First, Armenian identity is more central to the self-conception of traditional Armenians, most characteristic of the immigrant generation. Second, symbolic Armenians are not ashamed of their ancestral roots; on the contrary, they proudly declare their ancestral origins. Third, respondents affirm unconditionally their allegiance to the United States of America. As long as their Armenian loyalties do not come into conflict with their American status, they will be happy to carry on their Armenianness in the sidestream.

### *Ex-citizens and Ex-ethnics*

Though reasons for the continued maintenance of Armenian identification of the New York respondents have been explored, there is still a need to explain the variability in their answers. This is best described by the concept of role exit proposed by Ebaugh (1988). It is the process of becoming an ex-citizen, an ex-ethnic. Ebaugh defines "the process of disengagement from a role that is central to one's self-identity and the reestablishment of an identity in a new role that takes into account one's ex-role constitutes the process ... [of] role exit"

(1988, 1). The ex-role is characterized by unique expectations and norms that relate to one's previous status. Being a non-member is different from being an ex-member of a group. A change in self-identity involves withdrawing physically and emotionally from rights and obligations of a given role but is also a process of incorporating past identifications into one's new identity. The experiences of immigrants fit the role-exit process.[10] The process of leaving one's country of birth, coming to America, learning a new language, acquiring a new reference group, shifting friendship networks, and, most important, presenting oneself with a new identity makes one an ex-citizen and opens the way to becoming a hyphenated American.

Ebaugh has found that there are four stages or "moments" in the process of role exit: first doubts, seeking alternatives, turning points (i.e., anticipatory socialization, role rehearsals, shifting reference groups) and creating ex-role identity. She finds that "the essential dilemma involved in the ex-role is the incongruity and tension that exists between self-definition and social expectations" (Ebaugh 1988, 150). However, the issue that is of concern in this process is that even when an ex-role is created, residuals, "remnants or leftovers" from the previous one remain and "cloud and impact on one's current one" (Ebaugh 1988, 174). Role residual is sometimes beneficial as in the case of immigrants adjusting to a new social world; an experience often perceived as humiliating. Holding onto their past identity provides immigrants with meaning, comfort, and strength. More specifically Ebaugh finds that role residual "helps in coping with the fears and uncertainties that the future holds while believing that one's present self is the same as it was in the past. Since that self dealt successfully with life's complexities, it can and will continue to do so" (1988, 174).

The role-exit process may take months or years, and for some people the cycle may never come to an end. I suggest that the empirical variability observed in ethnic identification is related to the successful resolution of the process of role exit, or lack of it, and the different degrees of role residuals one retains. The Armenian case somewhat complicates the issues because only a fraction of immigrants come from an Armenian state; the majority are citizens of other host nations. Becoming an ex-citizen of a previous host nation is easy, but embracing a new hyphenated identity is a different matter. To illustrate, here

are the comments of a respondent (male professional sixty-two, born in Turkey, immigrated at age twenty-five):

> I do not think one has to be a hyphenated citizen of our country. In my view, being a U.S. citizen (which I am) does not diminish my feelings of being an Armenian. I was born as an Armenian and I will die as an Armenian. I chose to be an American citizen and I will exercise all my obligations—including love and respect—with great willingness and delight in my chosen country. Still, I do not wear two hats. I am and will ever be an Armenian of U.S. citizenship. I love each one equally well and hope never to be asked to choose between them.

Likewise, the nearly 10 percent of New York respondents who identified themselves as Lebanese-Armenian, Iranian-Armenian, etc., did not complete the role-exit process. They held onto their preemigration identities.

There is also another type of role exit one encounters in ethnic studies. When American-born men and women of ethnic descent, reared in the ethnic ghetto or community decide to exit from their ascribed status, they become ex-ethnics. Then, a more thorough identificational assimilation is completed. Ex-ethnics are most likely to identify themselves as American. These are in a minority in the New York sample basically because of the design of the study, though it is hypothesized that empirically ex-Armenians will become increasingly numerous. In sum, the process of role exit is equally applicable to the ethnicization process for early immigrants as it is for those who have completed their assimilation process.

In conclusion, the rate of people who claim Armenian descent in later generations and in spite of mixed ancestry is remarkably high compared to cultural, structural, and marital indicators of assimilation. Nonetheless, Armenian identity remains only an acceptance of Armenian heritage. It is doubtful that this emotional, expressive, verbal affiliation with a group will be translated into goal-oriented action. Moreover, the rates of those who claim American identity increase steadily, if slowly, with each succeeding generation.

## Sense of Peoplehood

Closely following identity, sense of peoplehood or we-ness endures as the most popular expression of symbolic Armenian-Americans. What does sense of peoplehood imply? It involves a profusion of

feelings and sentiments toward others of Armenian descent: feelings of affinity, of closeness, of belongingness, of group worth and esteem. At home or abroad, when Armenian-Americans recognize an Armenian name or person in movie credits, in the media, or on a storefront, or hear the accomplishments of a man or woman of Armenian descent who has gained prominence in the arts, in science, in business, in politics, in sports, it touches their heart. In other words, a sense of peoplehood entails positive feelings toward one's roots. It should be noted, however, that we-feelings do not mean a desire to go back to daily contact with fellow Armenians, or any behavioral participation in the Armenian community. Sense of peoplehood is in the spirit, and that is where Armenian-Americans want it to stay. Peoplehood is commonly expressed when Armenian-Americans recognize fellow Armenian celebrities and take pleasure in their accomplishments. Travel to the ancestral homeland is also an important source of we-ness ideally suited for symbolic Armenian-Americans because of its sporadic, leisure-time nature.

### *Celebrities and Others*

There was almost universal endorsement of a statement that read: "When I notice an Armenian name on a shop or in the media (such as movie credits, press) I feel happy, proud." Exactly 96.4 percent of the New York sample agreed, mildly or strongly, with the statement, only 1.7 percent disagreed. By all counts, this is a remarkable phenomenon. Even though there is a slight decrease of about 10 percentage points between the first and fourth generations, this drop is not statistically significant (see table 5.7). When an individual of Armenian descent achieves prominence in the mainstream, it is indeed heartwarming and a matter of pride. It is proof that one belongs to a group of talented and successful people. Such was the joy of a forty-seven-year-old second-generation woman who wanted to share her discovery with me. She wrote, "Did you know that an Armenian boy's song was selected for the honoring of Statue of Liberty this July 4th? His name is Turo Pashayan and the song is 'America, I love you.' ... Armenians are so colorful." This is a typical example of the sort of behavior that causes Armenian pride. Expressing vocally positive sentiments about one's Armenian background does not have costs or any disadvantages to

speak of. This is not unique to Armenians; most white ethnic groups in America share similar feelings toward their heritage (e. g., for Greeks see Moskos 1989, 146,148; also for Armenians, see O'Grady 1979, 111). Pride and affect are concordant with the definition of symbolic ethnicity.

A large number of respondents shared the feelings of a middle-aged, second-generation man who wrote on the questionnaire in capital letters: "I AM PROUD OF MY ARMENIAN HERITAGE." Yet, sense of peoplehood is not a constant quantity. It increases with positive reinforcement, both explicit instruction and implicit feedback, as it decreases and withers away when it is not continuously nourished and propped with affirmative evaluations. Some information about one's ancestral history and culture justifiably enhances one's stance, such as the young third-generation woman who wrote: "I have always been proud to be of Armenian descent because of my knowledge of my heritage." Similarly, a fifty-one-year-old man reminiscing about his immigrant parents and the sentiments they instilled in him said: "As I've grown older and wiser, I do see that there is a wealth of heritage

**TABLE 5.7**
**Frequencies of Responses (Ethnic Position) on Two Measures of Peoplehood by Generation (in percent)**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 580-583 | (218) | (272) | (36) | (41) | (16) |
| Agreeing on statement 1 | 97.7 | 96.3 | 94.3 | 95.1 | 87.5 |
| (no opinion) | (0.9) | (1.8) | (2.9) | (2.4) | (12.5) |
| Disagreeing on statement 2 | 87.2 | 82.5 | 83.3 | 78.0 | 75.0 |
| (no opinion) | (5.0) | (11.2) | (13.9) | (12.2) | (25.0) |

Statement 1: "When I notice an Armenian name on a shop or in the media (such as movie credits, press), I feel happy, proud."
Statement 2: "It is alright to change your name so that it will not be taken for an Armenian."

to be proud of. I also recognize the distinction of Armenians vs. Turkish historical achievement." On the other hand, the case of a young second-generation woman (mother Italian) exemplifies what one is more and more likely to find in the future: "Unfortunately, I was never educated on any of my ancestry. However, I would very much like to learn, but do not know where to begin."

Trying to nurture pride in the next generation and teach them something about Armenian history and culture seems to cause much concern among first- and second-generation parents and grandparents. A middle-aged U.S.-born mother wrote, "I love my rich, ancient, cultural heritage and have tried very hard to impart it to our sons who are now 2nd generation American/Armenians [*sic* ]. I hope they have our feelings as well." When parents and grandparents find that their offspring share their feelings of pride, they are overjoyed. Such is the case of the second-generation grandmother who wrote, "As you can see I did not marry an Armenian, nor did my daughter. However, she is proud of her Armenian heritage. As a result of this both of her children attend the Hovnanian Armenian school in NJ."

Pride in the ancestral background is also expressed occasionally through colorful books Armenian-Americans give as Christmas or birthday presents to *odar* in-laws, friends, acquaintances, or business associates. Coffee-table books, beautifully illustrated and printed on fine paper, on Armenian art or architecture make ideal gifts. They are aesthetically elegant tokens of Armenian culture and history, easy to flip through and be enlightened without having to read much except the captions underneath the photographs, in case one's curiosity gets carried away. Cookbooks are likewise on the bestseller lists of Armenian bookstores. They are deemed appropriate gifts for *odar* girlfriends and daughters-in-law. The illustrated editions introduce Armenian culture, in a symbolic way, without being overbearing or embarrassing. Similar to grandmas who parade "brag albums" of their grandchildren's favorite photos, symbolic Armenian-Americans show off their ancestral heritage through stunning photographs and handsome volumes they give away as gifts, or leave on coffee tables in their living rooms. They want everyone to see that they are proud of their Armenianness.

### *Armenian Names*

The majority of the New York respondents (81 percent) were reluctant to agree with the following statement: "It is alright to change your name so that it will not be taken for an Armenian." There was a generational increase in respondents advocating name change. The foreign-born were most likely to preserve the Armenian name (87 percent), and those in fourth generation least likely (75 percent). However, the differences were slight, not uniform nor statistically significant (see table 5.7). The same statement on name change was used in a study of Italian-Americans in Bridgeport (CT). Nearly 90 percent of the sample (N = 455) disagreed because it was believed that changing one's ethnic name is like "betraying one's family and people; it is a rejection of the group, a threat to its survival and, as such, is resisted vehemently" (Crispino 1980, 63). Indeed, an Armenian name is like a treasured heirloom, even though one need not know much about its provenance or significance.

Many participants in the survey commented on name change. The "ian" at the end of a surname is a sign of Armenian descent and identity. A middle-aged woman, in spite of being alienated from the Armenian community by marriage and divorce (to a non-Armenian), wrote: "Father used to say that if you meet any Armenians it's like meeting a member of your family, as very few of us are left. I always recognize the 'ian' at the end of names and go up to Armenians and kiss them."

Because of the xenophobic atmosphere in the United States in the 1920s and 1930s, many Armenians, like immigrants in other groups, felt the need to change their names. Several respondents described how their fathers or grandfathers had done so. A fifty-three-year-old man whose father was an Armenian immigrant (mother Italian) made the following comment to the statement on name change: "My father felt this way and did so. I wish he had not, but will not change it back." If some Armenian immigrants to the United States were motivated to change their names to avoid discrimination and prejudice, others had names that were difficult to pronounce and hindered business relations. An elderly respondent wrote: "My father changed our family name of [Barangozian] to [Baron] not to hide being an Armenian but because people could not pronounce our name

and he had a lot of trouble in his business dealings" (I have used pseudonyms here to maintain the respondent's confidentiality).

A small proportion of New York respondents who approved of name change did so for pragmatic reasons. A middle-aged woman who was born in Aleppo (Syria) but raised in the United States wrote: "If the name is very difficult, it could be changed." Another Turkish-born woman justified name change by saying: "Most Armenian names are of Turkish origin."[11] Indeed, during four hundred years of Ottoman rule, many Armenian family names had acquired Turkish roots, though most had the "ian" ending.[12] More recently, during Ataturk's rule, those who had remained in Turkey were coerced into Turkifying their names even further, dropping the "ian" ending, or exchanging it to the Turkish suffix *oglu*, meaning "son of." An elderly gentleman, born in France, agreed to name change adding: "But it must be a real Armenian name!" It should be noted that one can change one's name to become more Armenian. I know of several recent immigrants from Turkey who reinstated the "ian" ending to their family names after becoming U.S. citizens.

At present, Armenians no longer have the same motives to avoid an ethnic-sounding name. A sixty-six-year-old second-generation man, recalling his childhood experiences with an Armenian name, wrote: "As an Armenian it was embarrassing to hear teachers stumble over the name. At times, I wished I was one of the more simple names like Jones, etc. Now I wouldn't change it for a million. Love those different sounding names. I look for Armenian names as a source of pride in achievement of our people." Similarly, a young lawyer, Armenian on his father's side, Greek on his mother's reflected, "I really have had little contact with my Armenian heritage. My grandfather dropped the 'ian' ending from his name when he arrived here. I suppose to avoid being known as an Armenian. I am seriously considering adding it back."

Indeed, the Armenian people in the United States have come a long way from their humble immigrant origins. As an elderly respondent said: "It was the style years ago [to change names], not any more." Armenian-Americans are at present predominantly a middle- to upper-middle-class community, with many of them having achieved fame and fortune in the larger American society. The "ian" is no longer embarrassing, even the most assimilated of Armenian descendants are

reluctant to drop the "ian" deliberately. A middle-aged second-generation woman made the following observations about her family: "Many of my relatives are no longer Armenian with regard to religion, interest or association due to marriage with other ethnic spouses. My youngest relatives are fourth generation born in the U.S. However those with Armenian surnames have not changed their names or the spelling."

The emerging norm in the United States among career-oriented professionals who get married is to keep both their surnames; by creating a double-barrelled combination, husband, wife, and children assume the same family name. However, for the vast majority of the American population, the patrinomial system remains the norm; that is, a child takes the family name of his/her father. Armenians too have traditionally used the patrinomial system; with few exceptions they continue to do so today. Since Armenian names ending with "ian" function as a symbolic marker that delineates Armenians from non-Armenians, an unusual looking and sounding name entices non-Armenians to ask, what kind of a name is that? This simple question opens the door for disclosure of identity. It also sends messages to fellow Armenians that this person is "one of us." It helps establish rapport and affinity.

Consequently, in the case of mixed ancestry, if one's heritage is traced through the male line, and one's family name retains the "ian" ending, then that person will be reminded of his/her Armenian roots more often than an individual who traces descent through the matri-line. Of course, this is not to say that individuals who trace Armenianness through their mother cannot have a strong sense of peoplehood. On the contrary, mothers as principal caretakers and agents of socialization may exert a stronger impact on their children's identity by overemphasizing their Armenian roots. Moreover, not everybody in the United States with an "ian" name ending will acknowledge his/her Armenian identity.[13] Middle Eastern-born Armenians cannot understand how somebody can say: "I'm American, but my parents are Armenian." As I have already explained, Armenian identity in the United States is a matter of choice. Children are likely to drop their Armenian identity if they are not socialized to evaluate it positively.

Currently, the mood in the general U.S. population indicates a tolerance of exotic sounding names. One can readily observe the

profusion of unusual first names among African-Americans. I have observed that young parents, especially among the immigrant and second generation, are fond of giving their children Armenian first names. Granted, the names they choose are short and easily pronounced by Americans (see also O'Grady 1979, 11). Armenian-Americans parents can consult several sources before naming their child. On the market, there are a couple of small books that list Armenian boys' and girls' names and provide their English equivalent and/or significance. The pocket-size agenda published by the Prelacy of the Armenian Church, issued annually in the last several years, also carries such lists in the back. In sum, Armenian first names and family names are a sign of identity and peoplehood. A respondent in the New York survey appropriately said that I should have included the following item in the questionnaire: "Are the names of your children pure Armenian?"

*Travel to Spiritual Homeland*

Throughout the twentieth century, the spiritual homeland of the Armenian people has been divided between the Republic of Turkey and the Soviet Union. Though most Armenian-Americans trace their roots to towns and villages on the Anatolian Plateau in Turkey, few have been adventurous enough to venture beyond Istanbul and the major coastal cities on the Mediterranean. This is because traveling conditions in the hinterland are primitive in terms of transportation, accommodation, and availability of English-speaking guides. Most of all, Armenians fear an unfriendly reception. Those who attempt such a journey are such a rarity that upon their return to the United States, they show their slides to Armenian audiences and narrate their experiences.

For example in 1986, three men from the New York/New Jersey area climbed to the top of Mount Ararat. Paradoxically, Mount Ararat, one of the most cherished symbols of Armenian identity, is at present located within Turkish borders. For the three adventurous American-born Armenians, this was a second attempt. The previous year the Turkish authorities had forbidden the climb. The slide show I saw in Manhattan was very well attended and very emotional. Subsequently, several articles appeared in the Armenian press recounting this

symbolic climb.[14] Another trip to historic lands has been recorded for posterity by Theodore Bogosian in his documentary, "An Armenian Journey."[15] Bogosian accompanied Mariam Davis, a survivor of the Genocide, and her daughter back to the towns in Eastern Turkey where she was born, deported, lost all her family, and lived for about five years as a homeless child (towns of Terjan, Egin, and Arabkir). The traveling party concealed their Armenian identities from the local people and left town as soon as their suspicions were aroused.

Travel to Soviet Armenia has been largely dependent on U.S. foreign policy toward the Communist Bloc. During the Cold War period, ties were understandably hostile. As soon as East-West relations began to thaw and Armenian political parties redefined their policies vis-à-vis Soviet Armenia, tourism became popular. Claire Mouradian writes that starting in 1967, there were direct bi-weekly flights from Beirut to Yerevan, altogether avoiding the stopover in Moscow. In 1978 alone, Armenia SSR welcomed 60,000 tourists, a big proportion of them being diaspora Armenians (1990, 334). Several travel agencies in New York, Boston, and Los Angeles specialized in organizing group tours and chartering planes to Yerevan. A major incentive was that these trips were affordable for most.

Typically, Armenian-American tourists visit museums, ancient monuments, churches and monasteries, and spend an evening or two at the ballet or opera in Yerevan. The more privileged among them participate in Divine Liturgy in Echmiadzin and get invited for an audience with the Catholicos in his private quarters. Overall, individuals who visit Armenia are pleasantly surprised to be in the midst of a society where everyone around them speaks Armenian, all the signs on the streets are in Armenian, the radio and television are in Armenian, and where most people have dark hair and a complexion similar to themselves. For a fleeting moment in their lives, they feel they belong, they are a member of the majority. The experience is generally overwhelming.

According to one of the community leaders I interviewed who owns a travel agency that charters trips to Armenia, for a while in the mid-1980s, business was slowing down with the passing away of the older generation. In his opinion, younger people, in later generations, were not as frequent visitors. However, since the earthquake and political changes within Armenia and in the Soviet Union, diaspora-homeland

relations are at the threshold of a new era. Tourism is again gaining momentum. The Armenian church and voluntary associations are sponsoring pilgrimages, and the advertisements of travel agencies appear regularly in the Armenian press.[16] With increasing political stability, and improvement in hotel accommodations and other services in Yerevan, more Armenian-American tourists will be likely to visit the spiritual homeland during their vacation.

Because of space limitations, the final version of the New York questionnaire did not include items on travel to the ancestral homeland. Their absence was noted. For example, a thirty-five-year-old second-generation man who had visited Soviet Armenia and Turkey wrote: "In your next survey you might ask if the respondents have visited *Hayastan* [Armenia] and why." Several respondents were eager to share with me their connectedness to the Armenian spiritual homeland. A seventy-one-year-old, second-generation man said: "We plan to visit there this summer." A fifty-five-year-old woman whose mother is U.S.-born said: "I plan on going to Armenia in the fall." A middle-aged, third-generation woman wrote: "I visited Soviet Armenia a few years ago, and found that to be a wonderful experience." Another middle-aged, second-generation woman wrote: "My parents made two trips to Soviet Armenia which they enjoyed." A young second-generation man was even more adventurous. He visited Soviet Armenia as well as Armenian ancestral lands in present-day Turkey. Here are his comments: "I have visited Hayastan twice and Dikranagerd (Dyarbekir, Turkey) once, to become better acquainted with (and out of ethnic and family history see) [sic] my ancestral homeland." Like Israel for American Jews (see Cohen 1983, 168-69) and Greece for American Greeks (see Moskos 1989, 95), a trip to Armenia, the spiritual homeland, is a pilgrimage for Armenian-Americans. Unlike any other trip, this journey is imbued with meaning, symbolism, a unique experience in search of roots. It is the ultimate expression of one's Armenian identity.

Yet, for the Armenian-Americans, a sense of peoplehood is not confined to the geographical boundaries of the present-day Republics of Armenia or Turkey. Included on the itinerary of the Armenian tourist are historic sites and cultural centers of the diaspora. For example, when traveling in the vicinity of Venice, it is considered a must to visit the tiny island of San Lazaro where an Armenian

Catholic monastery, library, and printing press have existed since the eighteenth century. Motor boats, scheduled to stop at the island several times a day, are greeted by Mekhitarist monks who guide visitors through the museum and other areas open to the public. In the same way, it is a must to visit the Armenian Quarter when in Jerusalem, admire the ancient manuscripts, silver and gold relics, the Kutahia tiles, and other displays; maybe even kiss the ring of the Patriarch. When in Calcutta, Madras, or Singapore, one makes time to see the Armenian church and graveyard.

Armenians have "kin" wherever people of Armenian descent are to be found. Ethnic brokers and ideologues foster this diasporan sense of we-ness by emphasizing the commonality, interdependence, and shared past (and possibly future) of all who trace their roots, their bloodline, to historic Armenia. As demonstrated in previous chapters, the Armenian media is instrumental in promoting the ideology of an Armenian diaspora. News of other Armenian communities is featured regularly, thus indirectly propagating the message that Armenians around the world are one people.[17] The traditional Armenian organizations (religious, philanthropic, and political) that were established in the Old World have a diasporan character and interests. Through the years they have developed an infrastructure that necessitates communication between the leadership of the various communities, at least for administrative purposes. At the communal level, cultural exchanges are crucial in demonstrating commonality of culture and projecting a feeling of peoplehood. Folk dance ensembles, choirs, musicians, painters, sculptors, academic personalities are sporadically sponsored to perform, exhibit, or lecture in various Armenian communities. And lest one forgets, financial assistance to needy communities continues to be the backbone of diasporan relations.[18]

The universal sense of Armenian peoplehood often remains anecdotal. One hears stories of Armenian-Americans meeting other Armenians during their travels. They either overhear a conversation in Armenian or see the "ian" name ending on a shop or even look up common Armenian names in telephone directories and get in touch with them.[19] It is interesting to note that less than 4 percent of the New York sample have family living outside the United States. The unaffiliated, later-generation individual of Armenian descent is least likely to test his or her "closeness" to fellow diasporan Armenians.

The concept of an Armenian diaspora remains an ideal that does not touch the daily lives of most Armenian-Americans. For most of them, Armenians around the world are linked by make-believe emotional ties. That is why I have called the ancestral territory the *spiritual homeland*. Armenian-Americans consider the United States of America their real home. They have no intention of settling elsewhere. Yet, whenever travel is possible and is realized, it heightens feelings of peoplehood and creates strong memories that nourish the individual for a long time to come. The popularity of travel is ultimately its sporadic, leisure-time convenience.

## Centrality of the Genocide in Armenianness

Even though mass killings and deliberate destruction of human societies have been common in history since early antiquity, the term genocide was not coined until the 1930s. Since then, however, it has entered everyday discourse, acquiring highly negative loading. The term has been popularized to such an extent that it has become difficult to examine the phenomenon scientifically. Moreover, because of the vested political interests of various governments, a consensus on a universal definition of genocide has not been achieved. As a result, systematic analyses of the anatomy and processes of genocide and theory building remain at an elementary stage (Chalk and Jonassohn 1990). Nonetheless, experts seem to concur that genocide is "a structural and systematic destruction of innocent people by a state bureaucratic apparatus" (Horowitz 1980, 17). It entails one-sided mass killings, aimed at exterminating an entire collectivity. More specifically, it is the "ruthless ... pursuit of human life-taking without regard to individual guilt or innocence. It is a punishment for identification with a particular group, not for personal demeanor or performance" (Horowitz 1984, 2).

There is no doubt that the Armenian case is a prototype of genocide. In 1915, the deliberate and systematic policy of the Young Turk government was to annihilate the Armenian people and eradicate their presence from their ancestral lands. Seventy-five years later, the trauma of the Genocide and deportations continues to hover in the forefront of Armenian collective consciousness. Adding insult to injury, Turkish governments have repeatedly denied any wrongdoing

and, of late, they have pursued aggressive revisionist policies that have infuriated Armenians. The literature on the Armenian Genocide and the debate with the Turkish revisionists has increased considerably in recent years (e.g., see Dadrian 1975a, 1975b, 1986a, 1986b, 1988, 1990; Dedeyan 1982; Horowitz 1980, 1984, 1986; Hovannisian 1986; Kuper 1981; Libaridian 1984, 1986; Papazian 1986; Permanent Peoples' Tribunal 1985; Walker 1980). The major concern here, however, is the impact of the Genocide on Armenian-Americans and its role in manifestations of Armenianness.

The tragic events at the turn of the twentieth century radically transformed the demographic, social, and psychological makeup of the Armenian people. It is important to stress that the process of genocide was not confined to one segment or proportion of the population. It was truly widespread. The Genocide continues to have significant repercussions on Armenian-American lives today. Its memory remains not only vivid in the minds of the survivors, the generation that witnessed firsthand the atrocities, but also their offspring who have not been spared their share of grief and psychological problems. Even the survivors' grandchildren have been deeply touched by the the stories they have heard or read. Respondents in the New York study described the consequences the cataclysmic events have had on their lives and that of their parents. For many of them, the Genocide was a fact of daily life.

The massacres and deportations left deep psychological, social, and physical scars. The remarks of a second-generation respondent testify to this effect: "My father was born in October, 1895, a week before the first massacres came to Shebin-Karahissar. He showed signs of infant malnutrition all his life." Social consequences were no less devastating; the world Armenians had taken for granted collapsed. They were chased out of their homes, their homeland; their social networks were broken, their communal infrastructure was shattered. Furthermore, Armenian refugees immigrated to alien societies with strange customs and languages; adding physical and social distance between them and their past. Nothing was the same anymore.

Even though the perpetrators did not make any distinctions by gender, age, or social status, each age cohort was affected in a different way by the tragic events. Those who were still children when the events occurred became orphans; they suffered malnutrition as in

the case quoted above. Their schooling was disrupted, influencing their ability to earn a living as adults. Young women in their teens and twenties, especially the pretty ones, had the highest probability of being raped. Older cohorts of women became widows. Many lost all their children and with that the possibility of ever becoming grandmothers. The loss of a husband also meant the loss of one's means of livelihood and future security. Irrespective of one's social status before the events, poverty was widespread in the post-Genocide era. Poverty was not only financial. Refugees lacked material assets and human resources. Becoming an orphan or a widow increased the chances of long-term poverty.

Psychologically, survivors suffered guilt, anxiety, and reactive depression. They were not alone; their children shared their pain and nightmares. For example, a seventy-three-year-old foreign-born woman who immigrated as a child, explains:

> My mother suffered psychologically from these terrible experiences (losing my father, her child, etc) and as a result before I graduated from high school she broke down completely and was institutionalized the rest of her life. The Turks scarred not just those who were directly under their control but many, many who went away and left them. Visiting her for all those years (39) as I grew up, married, etc. was a constant reminder of what the Turks stood for.

Likewise, a second-generation woman recalled that her grandmother who witnessed the fire of Smyrna "always wore black and seldom smiled." Another woman said her grandmother "could not talk about the old country as she was reduced to tears when we questioned her." Similarly, several respondents indicated their parents or grandparents did not talk about the massacres, such as the woman who wrote: "My father kept to himself all that happened during the Massacres [and] never really came out and told us; I guess it brought back too many sad memories." For some, assimilation into American society was a way of forgetting a painful past. Like many others, a little Armenian girl was orphaned, then saved by American missionaries who placed her in an orphanage in Beirut, Lebanon. Her fifty-four-year-old American-born son wrote: "I suspect my mother needed to put all those terrible memories of her girlhood behind her and Americanization was the quickest way to do it." Yet, as psychiatric evidence shows (see below), repression of traumatic experiences could not have been a cure.

There were survivors who clung to their church, to the remaining members of their families, to their Armenian identity, and testified to the horrors and painful events they witnessed. A young third-generation woman wrote: "As a child I listened to many stories from my grandparents of the massacres and struggles of Armenians then." A thirty-six-year-old woman who emigrated from Lebanon at age eighteen said that she had lost her grandparents and four uncles in 1915; then described her perception of the Genocide: "I still remember those cold winter nights when my father used to tell us the story of his family who were killed by the Turks with tears in his eyes.... How could I forget those stories, those tearful eyes which I can't see anymore?" Some parents and grandparents tempered the stories they told their offspring. A forty-one-year-old man who is of Armenian descent from his mother's side wrote: "My mother very deliberately (in my opinion) downplayed stories of Turkish massacres (always balancing stories of attacks with recitals of the fact that Turkish neighbors would hide my grandmother from harm)."

Surprisingly, there are few systematic studies of the psychological impact of the massacres and deportations on survivors and their offspring. One of the rare scientific investigations of the subject is Donald and Lorna Miller's (1986) analysis of the oral histories of ninety-two survivors in California. The Millers argue that reactions to the massacres and deportations must be understood within the framework of a typology of six responses: repression, rationalization, resignation, reconciliation, rage, and revenge. The first response, repression, involves unconscious or conscious denial or forgetting of events "too horrible to contemplate... [because they] are tinged with guilt and shame: memories of rape, forced nudity, humiliation of parents, the abandonment of siblings, coerced conversion to Islam" (Miller and Miller 1986, 192). The second, rationalization is finding political, pragmatic, and religious explanations in order to derive some positive benefit or meaning from the ordeal. The third is resignation; it is rooted in helplessness. The Millers elaborate as follows:

> The dehumanization, degradation, and humiliation that occurred during the deportations—expressed especially when deportees were forced to walk naked, when caravans were marched by water sources and not allowed to drink, when parents were forced to abandon children, to say nothing of acts of plunder, rape, torture, separation from parents—established the experiential basepoint from which some survivors have never recovered.

The fourth category in the typology of responses to genocide is reconciliation. Survivors interpret their experiences as part of life and point to the exceptions such as Turks who were helpful to them. However, the researchers retort, denial precludes complete reconciliation and healing because as the survivors suggested, it is as if the Turkish government was rubbing salt into their wounds. The fifth response is rage or extreme forms of anger and frustration. This is most vividly typified by hatred of the Turks. Miller and Miller write, "the very word Turk clearly elicits very visceral reactions from many Armenians" (1986, 199). Finally, the researchers suggest that the second and third generations are more revengeful than the survivors because militancy requires a position of strength. Retaliation for something unjust can take the form of "terrorism" or rely on divine retribution or other symbolic forms.

Further, Miller and Miller contend that feelings toward the traumatic experiences are not constant. They vary by different stages of the life course. More specifically, between the ages of six and fifteen, survivors were consumed with physical survival, there was no room for political consciousness. Only when they were established in their own families and occupations, during later stages of their life course, did survivors start to reflect upon their experiences and realize its enormity; thereupon "bitterness and anger began to fester" (Miller and Miller 1986, 188). For a few, advanced age meant reconciliation, but the majority became increasingly preoccupied with thoughts of the massacres.

Miller and Miller found also that seven intervening variables could have tempered the responses of survivors. These include the degree of suffering and deprivation one endured; whether one or both parents survived, losing both parents increased feelings of total abandonment. Many orphans underwent religious conversion during their tutelage under Protestant missionaries; such an experience changed their interpretation of what had happened to them. In some orphanages, survivors formed surrogate families and received formal education and occupational training; others were not as lucky. Women tended to be more reconciled than men. Those who later became members of Armenian political parties were more militant in spirit. Last but not least, those who lived with Turkish families projected their particular treatment (positive or negative) upon Turkish people in general. In

conclusion, the Millers' study is significant for showing the variability and complexity of responses to genocide. But most of all, by delineating common patterns, they have moved the analysis a giant step forward toward theory building. Human behavior is after all not altogether random.

Psychiatrists Boyajian and Grigorian's article (1986) compliments the above findings. They describe the "survivor syndrome." Survivors feel that they have to apologize for living. They have a strong sense that the good family members died, leaving the unworthy ones like themselves behind. The dead are elevated to the status of martyrs: martyrs of the church, martyrs of the nation. It is little wonder that Genocide memorials have been built in almost every major diasporan center. Writing about the survivors who emigrated to the United States, Boyajian and Grigorian describe their inability to enjoy their good fortune, their freedom, and the fruits of their labor; adding, "as if enjoyment would bring punishment, misfortune, and disaster" (1986, 178).

Genocide survivors undergo identity crises. They feel robbed of their faith and their patrimony, besides they see no hope of ever returning "home." While witnessing the atrocities, survivors cultivate psychological skills that help them cope with their unbearable experiences. By developing a sense of detachment and lack of affect, survivors imagine they are observers to the events rather than subjects. However, the survivors cannot forget the memories, which keep haunting them as long as they live. Repeatedly, pictures from the past come to their minds in the form of nightmares.

Boyajian and Grigorian further note that Armenian-American survivors who had access to compatriotic societies, Armenian churches, and communal life were able to talk about their sufferings and collectively mourn their losses. In contrast, survivors who were geographically isolated from other Armenian families were reluctant to verbalize and share their feelings. Unable to unburden their guilt and anxieties, they tried to repress them—not very successfully. These observations are corroborated by the results of a study of twenty women survivors in Providence (RI) and Watertown (MA). Interestingly, Sarkisian found that there is no single word in Armenian for "coping." The Genocide was "not seen as coping; but rather as survival." Above all, it was an *ongoing* phenomenon that was never

resolved (1988, 55). Nonetheless, these New England Armenian women had coped remarkably well because their "commitment to their religion and to family helped them adapt to the adversities of the event, and continues to help them cope with life in their old age" (Sarkisian 1984, 44). Evidently, those who coped with the trauma best lived long enough to tell their stories. In any case, the data proves that collective mourning is a mechanism that heals survivors and integrates generations and communities.

What about the children of the survivors of the Genocide? Boyajian and Grigorian argue that "a dominant theme that emerges is the feeling of being 'special'; special in the sense that there is an obligation that was placed upon them directly or indirectly, to be the bearers of the hopes and aspirations, not only of a given family but of a whole people" (1986, 181). Such children are overprotected, bear the names of dead relatives, carry some of the shame and guilt of their parents, but most of all, they see life as a "serious business; ... they [are] required to be serious and in some sense, almost sad" (1986, 181). It is as if they do not deserve happiness or joy. Boyajian and Grigorian support my contention (see above) that children and grandchildren of Genocide survivors carry the burden of ethnic continuity. That is, the second-generation Armenian-Americans are most likely to be susceptible to their parents' urges to marry within the group and perpetuate their Armenian identity. The third generation is not released of that obligation; though by then the elders lose their power to demand compliance. In sum, the Genocide is shared by *all* three generations; it is the quintessential Armenian experience of the twentieth century.

Finally, Boyajian and Grigorian ask: Why has the Genocide had such a strong influence on Armenian identity irrespective of generations? Here is their answer:

> it is not something that one can put aside and say that it has happened in the past and should be forgotten, because one cannot do that when it has never been accepted as a fact. One must clear one's name and set the record straight. It is not that Armenians wish to take on an identity of martyrs and victims; it is simply that those ghosts won't go away.
>
> ...
>
> The nonrecognition of the Armenian genocide generates an identity formation problem in the life cycle of Armenians. This identity devaluation may continue for

generations to come unless and until it is resolved by proper recognition of the genocide by the world at large. (1986, 183-84)

The Genocide is remembered every year on April 24. On that day in 1915 the Turkish government rounded up all the Armenian intellectuals in Istanbul. They were all subsequently murdered. April 24 stands for all the acts of violence committed against the Armenian people during that period. In the United States, the Genocide is commemorated by requiems in all Armenian churches as well as public gatherings, marches, rallies, speeches, and special events like tree-planting and wreath-laying ceremonies, concerts, plays, and so on. New York respondents were asked to describe their feelings about Turkey's denial of the Genocide. They could choose one or several of the following answer categories: indifference; Armenians need justice; anger; frustration; and other. Interestingly, respondents felt the need to add "forget past" to the list. Respondents were also asked whether they attended memorial services and public gatherings on or around April 24 during the year preceding the survey.

As with other variables examined throughout this study, behavior falls short of attitudinal intentions. The New York survey shows that about 95 percent of the sample have strong feelings toward the Genocide, but less than half participate in commemorative events. More specifically, 41 percent of the sample attended requiem services and 27.4 percent attended public gatherings for April 24 (see also chap. 3 for similar results). Feelings toward the Genocide received higher percentages: 61.3 percent said Armenians need justice, another 60.7 percent said they felt angry, 9.4 percent were humiliated by it. Only a very small proportion of the sample (about 5 percent of

**TABLE 5.8**
**Frequencies of Respondents Attending Genocide Commemorative Activities (Requiem and Public Gatherings) by Generation (in percent)**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 581-584 | (219) | (272) | (36) | (41) | (16) |
| Requiem | 57.5 | 33.5 | 30.6 | 17.1 | 18.8 |
| Public gathering | 40.6 | 19.9 | 25.0 | 14.6 | 12.5 |

responses) were not awed by the historic events; 4.5 percent felt indifferent, and 2.8 percent said that one should forget about the past and carry on with life.

There is a decrease with each passing generation in behavioral measure, but little attitudinal change (see tables 5.8, 5.9). The longer the generational presence, the less likely respondents were to attend memorial services (tau c .28*) as well as, rallies, meetings, marches, and other types of public events (tau c .20*). The biggest drop is between the immigrant generation and the second generation (24 percentage points for requiems and 21 points for public gathering). On the other hand, there were few generational differences in feelings of anger toward the Turkish denial of the Genocide or revindication of justice. The first generation is most likely to feel humiliated, but this is not a widespread feeling. There is a very small but steady increase in respondents who feel indifferent toward the Turkish revisionists. American-born generations are also most likely to suggest that Armenians should forget the past.

Respondents affiliated with Armenian denominations were most likely to attend requiem services commemorating the Armenian

**TABLE 5.9**
**Frequency Distribution of Respondents' Feelings toward Turkey's Denial of the Genocide by Generation (multiple response)**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 573 (cases) | (215) | (270) | (35) | (38) | (15) |
| Need justice (351 responses) | 46.8 | 42.1 | 41.5 | 48.9 | 35.0 |
| Anger (348 responses) | 43.3 | 44.3 | 43.9 | 42.5 | 45.0 |
| Humiliation (54 responses) | 8.0 | 7.2 | 2.4 | 0.0 | 5.0 |
| Indifference (26 responses) | 1.9 | 3.7 | 2.4 | 6.4 | 10.0 |
| Forget past (16 responses) | 0.0 | 2.7 | 9.7 | 2.1 | 5.0 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Genocide (tau c .32*; see table 5.10). While half of the Apostolics attended requiem services, only one-tenth of those who had "other" religious affiliations did so (a drop of almost 41 percentage points). Those who profess no religious persuasion understandably were even less likely to attend church services; slightly more attended public gatherings. Respondents with "other" religious affiliations were also least likely to attend public gatherings (.24*). Here again, attitudes were in sharp contrast to actual behavior. Religious affiliations did not change one's feelings (see table 5.11).

Approximately 60 percent of respondents who sympathized with Armenian political parties (Tashnag, Ramgavar, and Hunchag) attended memorial services compared to 49 percent of *chezok* (nonpartisan), 19 percent of those who were indifferent to such ideologies, and 37 percent who rejected Armenian politics. The Tashnag party, as discussed in chapter 2, is the most militant of Armenian political parties. Consequently, Tashnag sympathizers were most likely to attend public gatherings (47.7 percent), followed by Ramgavars (39.3 percent), *chezoks* (31.5 percent), those who reject Armenian political parties (21.4 percent), and least of all, the indifferents (13.6 percent; tau c .22*).

The Genocide and its subsequent denial by Turkish governments is therefore a symbol of collective Armenian identity. It affected not only one segment of the population, but almost everyone. It serves as a common denominator, an equalizer of all differences between Armenians: national, regional, religious, ideological, political, socioeconomic, generational, and so on. Armenian community brokers and intellectuals have used the Genocide as a tool to mobilize men and

**TABLE 5.10**
**Frequencies of Respondents Attending Genocide Commemorative Activities (Requiem and Public Gatherings) by Religious Affiliation (in percent)**

| | Apostolic Armenian | Protestant Armenian | Catholic Armenian | Other (Non-Arm.) | No Religion |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 573—576 | (370) | (56) | (22) | (92) | (36) |
| Requiem | 51.6 | 39.3 | 40.9 | 10.9 | 5.6 |
| Public gathering | 36.0 | 21.4 | 18.2 | 5.4 | 8.3 |

women of Armenian descent, to foster a sense of we-ness, and to maintain their ethnic allegiance. The Genocide has become an ideology. By selecting such a symbolic framework, Armenian-Americans have been provided with a sense of peoplehood, cultural rebirth, and historical continuity. So far, it has been fairly successful.

Some Armenian scholars and activists feel the Genocide has not been politicized sufficiently.[20] On the other hand, there is a small but growing group of critics who argue that the idiom of the Genocide has been overworked. They contend that Armenianness cannot and should not be equated only with Genocide. They suggest Armenian-Americans have reached a saturation point; they can no longer rest their entire being on mourning the past. It is time to think about the future as well. Armenian culture is rich, surely more positive symbolic frameworks could be selected from the past that would offer a sense of continuity. Several of my interviewees suspected that the sadness that pervades the Armenian collective psyche is alienating younger cohorts, making them reluctant to get involved in Armenian communal life. One informant told me that she had often wondered about the meaning of "kef nights." In her mind it was as if Armenians

**TABLE 5.11**
**Frequency Distribution of Respondents' Feelings toward Turkey's Denial of the Genocide by Religious Affiliation**
**(multiple response)**

| | Apostolic Armenian | Protestant Armenian | Catholic Armenian | Other (Non-Arm.) | No Religion |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 565 (cases) | (366) | (54) | (22) | (89) | (34) |
| Need justice (346 responses) | 45.1 | 49.3 | 51.8 | 40.3 | 31.7 |
| Anger (341 responses) | 44.3 | 38.0 | 37.0 | 42.1 | 53.7 |
| Humiliation (53 responses) | 7.6 | 5.6 | 7.4 | 5.3 | 2.4 |
| Indifference (26 responses) | 2.1 | 7.0 | 0.0 | 7.9 | 2.4 |
| Forget past (15 responses) | 0.9 | 0.0 | 3.7 | 4.4 | 9.8 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

could not have fun any other time. In addition, Libaridian (1991, 1-2) has argued that the Genocide impedes rational political discourse because the specter of Pan-Turkism hovers around the collective consciousness of the Armenian people, turning them psychologically into victims, obsessed with an overburdened past, fearful of more massacres.

These sentiments are corroborated by a few respondents in the New York study, such as the seventy-year-old second-generation man who was more interested in living up to the standards of mainstream society than of making an issue of the denial. Here are his views:

> A waste of time and energy for no purpose.... Why do you and many Armenians re-live and dwell on the past. When will we stop pleading for sympathy—meaningless and worthless sympathy? Let's not grovel and squirm and try to impress the world by what Armenians suffered. On the contrary let's raise our heads up high and be proud of the accomplishments of present day Armenians in industry, science, government, sports, education, and art.

Likewise, the almost 3 percent of the sample who suggested that Armenians should forget the past testify to this increasing impatience with living in the past. Such was the answer of a forty-seven-year-old, second-generation woman: "I am more interested in looking forward than back. God and the Armenian people and any well educated person knows history. That is enough." Another thirty-year-old woman, who like her father was U.S.-born, commented that she felt "No indifference, but it is not so vital to me, that they admit to it. Everyone else knows they did it, so what's the big deal?"

It is not true that "everyone" knows that the Turkish government perpetrated the Armenian Genocide; human beings have short memories, and history is continuously rewritten. In a historical analysis of American public opinion concerning the "Armenian Question," Papazian (1986) describes how from a "cause celebre" in the early twentieth century the Genocide came to be "alleged" in the 1970s (see also Malkasian 1984). Similarly, a content analysis of Armenian issues in the *New York Times* from 1965 to 1983 found that "distortions of history progressively increased" (Sinanian 1987, 49).

While some want to forget the Genocide and the Turkish denial, others want to resolve the controversy so that they can go on with the business of living. Indeed, there is a growing awareness among Armenian-Americans that Turkey's denial of the Genocide is a serious

issue that needs to be addressed professionally and politically. Here are some of the respondents' suggestions as to what should be done. A sixty-year-old second-generation respondent said: "When a Turk killed an Armenian he did not ask his political affiliation. Armenians should unite their efforts to right the Genocide of 1915. Church masses are not enough. United demonstrations must be organized and made effective. Advertisements in important newspapers and journals." Similarly, a forty-six-year-old third-generation man observed: "Both my wife and I lost grandfathers in the Turkish Massacres of 1921 but we feel education and prudent political activism is the best way of helping the 'Armenian Cause.'"

On the other hand, a seventy-one-year-old second-generation man well-aware of diasporan conditions wrote: "I ... feel what is to be gained by an admittance of guilt, would only make it a greater problem for the few of our people remaining in Turkey." Suggestions aside, there is little consensus as to what actions should be taken, what the goals of such action would be politically and ideologically, and who should speak for the Armenians. As the present study has shown over and over again, it is hard to mobilize symbolic ethnics for political or any other action, even when sentiments are not lacking.

In conclusion, the survey indicates that while feelings toward the Genocide are almost universal, Armenian-Americans are not likely to participate in commemorative events at the collective level. These results are not surprising for symbolic ethnics, as consistently observed, behavior lags behind feelings. Kramer and Leventman's (1961, 17) observations that "sentiment exceeds commitment" remain valid even for something as dear to Armenian-Americans as the Genocide. Obviously, some actions are easier and less conspicuous than others. Attending church services is not as demanding as participating in a rally in Times Square (NYC) or marching up a street with banners and signs. Only the most politicized of ethnics, mostly from the first generation and those sympathetic to Armenian political parties and ideologies are willing to attend public events.

Yet, affect vis-à-vis the Genocide and its denial are not lacking. Only one respondent in the entire sample (forty-five-year-old third-generation professional, affiliated with non-Armenian church) asked: "What is April 24?" The survey findings support the notion that the Genocide and its denial are central elements in Armenianness today. It

is central to such an extent, and the burden of its proof weighs so heavily on the collective consciousness of the survivors and their descendants that the richness of the Armenian culture and experience have a tendency to be reduced to the Genocide, to martyrdom. One of my informants showed me a book on nationalities where the following entry occupied a full page in bold print: "ARMENIANS ARE ALWAYS MASSACRED." He believed that it was a fitting description. Not only do insiders see themselves as victimized people, but they are likely to be perceived in the same way by outsiders. For example, whenever news of Armenians appears in the mass media, it is often coupled with mention of the Genocide.

## Armenian Cuisine

Food has been called "the last bastion" of ethnicity (Steinberg 1981, 63-65). Is it the case for Armenian-Americans? Two questions in the New York survey examined the maintenance of ethnic food: first, the frequency of eating Armenian food at home; second, ability of respondents to cook Armenian dishes. The change in behavior is in the predicted direction; the longer the generational presence, the less the frequency of eating Armenian food at home (.24*) and the fewer Armenian dishes one knows how to cook (.24*). While 75.5 percent of foreign-born respondents eat Armenian food at home at least once a week, this percentage decreases gradually to 18.8 percent for fourth-

**TABLE 5.12**
**Frequency Distribution of Eating Armenian Food by Generation**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 582 | (218) | (270) | (36) | (41) | (16) |
| Few times per year | 10.1 | 18.1 | 22.2 | 39.0 | 31.3 |
| Few times per month | 14.2 | 25.8 | 27.8 | 39.0 | 50.0 |
| Once a week or more | 75.7 | 56.1 | 50.0 | 22.0 | 18.8 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

generation respondents (see table 5.12). Again, while about 63 percent of the first generation were able to cook thirteen dishes or more, only about 20 percent of the third generation were able to do so (see table 5.13). Obviously, it is easier to eat a dish than to prepare it.

This trend is corroborated by Aposhian's[21] comparative study of foreign-born Armenians with third-generation Armenian-Americans. When she asked her respondents what they considered their food preference at home to be, 42 percent of the foreign-born replied exclusively Armenian and Middle Eastern, while none of the American-born had such a preference. Another 26 percent of the first generation said it was mostly Armenian, compared to 3 percent of third-generation. The majority of American-born (62 percent) enjoyed both Armenian and American cuisine in contrast to 32 percent of the first generation. Finally, none of the foreign-born said they preferred mostly American food, while 35 percent of the third generation said so.

Yet, it is remarkable that 68.8 percent of respondents with the longest generational presence in the United States eat Armenian food at least several times a month. Similar findings are reported for other ethnic groups, a trait anecdotally called "the patriotism of the stomach" (Moskos 1989, 96 n.12). For example, it was found that most Italians "prefer pasta over potatoes and wine over beer or hard liquor" (Johnson 1985, 39). Likewise, a survey found that more than four out of five third-generation Greek-Americans regarded Greek food to be very much part of their diet (Moskos 1989, 96). What do

**TABLE 5.13**
**Frequency Distribution of Knowledge of Cooking Armenian Dishes by Generation**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 581 | (217) | (270) | (36) | (41) | (16) |
| 0-5 Dishes | 8.8 | 20.3 | 25.0 | 48.8 | 50.0 |
| 6-12 Dishes | 28.1 | 34.3 | 33.3 | 31.7 | 25.0 |
| >13 Dishes | 63.1 | 45.4 | 41.7 | 19.5 | 25.0 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

these results mean? Armenian food continues to be favored intergenerationally, but is changing from being a routine, almost daily occurrence to an occasional, "special" event.

Had I asked respondents whether they enjoy eating Armenian food, I am almost certain the answer would have been unanimously affirmative. Armenian-Americans, like the rest of America, live increasingly in two-income households and are committed to their occupations plus a number of other interests. In short, they have very busy schedules in a time-hungry society. The life-style of the average family has changed yet again with the advent of the postindustrial economy. Now more than ever, individuals and families "eat out." Even when they are at home, they are likely to call in for a pizza or heat up a frozen entrée in the microwave. In any case, contemporary Americans, including those of Armenian descent, tend to simplify and shorten the process of meal preparation. On special occasions, however, they will indulge themselves with the time and energy required to fix more elaborate Armenian or other dishes.

A recent survey of Armenian restaurants on five continents supports my observations. *Armenian International Magazine* correspondents were not able to find any Armenian sit-down restaurants in Jerusalem, Cairo, Damascus, Amman, or Tehran in spite of their well-established Armenian communities. The editors attribute this discrepancy to "the eating habits and family traditions in these communities that make ethnic dining establishments superfluous" (June 1991, p. 34). Indeed, in these communities where Armenianness is taken for granted, where identity is ascribed, Armenian food is part of daily life, and women of the family are the most accomplished chefs. Why would anyone want to pay for something that is readily available, at its best, at home? Changes in eating habits of Armenian-Americans are attributed not only to processes of assimilation, but also to transformations in the nature of the economy and means of production.

Respondents who were affiliated with non-Armenian denominations or profess "no religion," and those with mixed parentage were similarly least likely to eat Armenian food often at home (.26* and .17* respectively). Armenian Apostolics tended to eat Armenian food at home most frequently (70 percent), next in descending order came Armenian Protestants (68 percent), Armenian Catholics (41 percent), those with non-Armenian denominations (33

percent) and finally those with "no religion" (19 percent). The threefold decrease in eating Armenian food between Apostolics and those with no religious persuasion may be attributed to the latter's less traditional views, and, it seems, less traditional behavior.

A non-Armenian parent more than halves the chances of eating Armenian food at home. About a quarter of those who had mixed parentage ate Armenian food at least once a week in contrast to about two-thirds of those with two Armenian parents. It is interesting to note that the integration of non-Greek wives was found to be smoother when she learned to cook Greek food (Moskos 1989, 96). I have observed the same phenomenon among Armenian-Americans. An *odar* wife is spoken of highly when she masters the art of making baklava, or stuffed vine leaves, or produces a lavish display of her culinary skills at a Thanksgiving or Christmas family gathering (see also O'Grady 1979). Similarly, a forty-three-year-old U.S.-born respondent whose husband was *odar* wrote with great delight: "My non-Armenian relatives have learned to make boreog, shish kebab, and pilaf, Armenian culture, no?"

I have argued in chapter 1 that women play a very significant role in ethnic maintenance because of their labor in food preparation and other contributions necessary for the sustenance of the family unit. The New York survey supports these claims. Several respondents wrote that they eat Armenian food when they visit their parents' home, or when their mother sends them care packages. Ethnic food is one of the few dependent variables that was statistically significant with gender (.17* for knowledge to cook and .14 significant at .003 level for frequency of eating Armenian food). Not surprisingly, women in the New York sample knew how to cook the maximum number of Armenian dishes (58 percent for women compared to 42 percent for men). After all, women's traditional domain has been the kitchen. Women were also more likely than men to eat Armenian food at home most frequently, presumably because they can cook the dishes they feel like eating (66 percent for women vs 54 percent for men). In this regard, men are dependent on women, especially those vested in the patriarchal system.

Eating ethnic food is an easy ethnic trait that does not come into conflict with modern middle-class American society. On the contrary, ethnic food has become popular in the United States in the last couple

of decades. Americans have become adventurous with their taste buds. People are no longer exclusively loyal to the cuisine of their ancestors; rather, variability is the norm. Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Mexican, Thai, Ethiopian cuisines among many others have become very fashionable in gourmet dining. This craze has even trickled down to the general public. Street fairs, festivals, and bazaars in major American towns and cities are havens for all ethnic cuisines. For example, during its eighteen years of existence, the One World Festival in New York City featured vendors from different ethnic groups who peddled their specialities. In the midst of Thai, Vietnamese, and Mexican vendors, Armenian parish councils and voluntary associations sold shish kebab, stuffed vine leaves, *boreog* (cheese, meat or spinach in *filo* or streudel dough), *lahmejoun* (Armenian meat pizza), and of course, baklava.

What does America's craze with ethnic cuisines imply? According to Steinberg (1981, 64), it symbolizes the melting pot, not ethnic pluralism. Surely, one does not have to be Jewish to enjoy a pastrami sandwich, or Italian to like pizza, or Armenian to crave shish kebab and pilaf; these have become "American" dishes. It has also been argued that the persistent preference for Italian cuisine among later-generation Italian-Americans is due to its acceptance by the larger American public. Alba explains:

> Among the outward manifestations of culture, cuisine is probably unique in the sense that its weakening among Italians and its acceptability in the wider society bring about a convergence, in which acculturation occurs as a two-way process of interaction between ethnic group and host society, rather than as a one-way imposition of the host culture on the new group. (1985a, 133-34)

The same generalizations apply to Armenian cuisine or any ethnic cuisine for that matter.

In the last couple of decades, the average American palate has become more cosmopolitan. The abundance of ethnic restaurants in most U.S. towns and cities has certainly contributed to an increased experimentation with food tastes and styles. Additionally, purveyors of ethnic staples have become increasingly astute in marketing their goods. For instance, pita bread, lavash crackers, Armenian string cheese, and Colombo's yogurt[22] (and its competitors) are now sold in most supermarkets. I contend that if *lahmejoun* (Armenian meat pizza) were readily available in supermarkets, and if Armenian restaurants or

eateries were as omnipresent as Chinese takeouts or pizzerias, not only would more Armenian-Americans be eating Armenian food, so would the general public.

Writing about Armenian food one is always confronted with the following question: What is authentic Armenian cuisine anyway? During their historic migrations, Armenians inevitably exchanged with their host societies a number of cultural items, including dietary habits. It is therefore natural that Armenians developed distinctive regional cuisines, as it is natural that they share many dishes, cooking styles, and tastes for certain staples and ingredients with neighboring Middle Eastern or Mediterranean peoples such as the Greeks, Turks, Lebanese, Sephardic Jews, Persians, and Yugoslavs. In the United States, this regional commonality of Middle Eastern cuisines has been advantageous. Through economies of scale, Armenian consumers have had increased access to speciality food stores. Today in many American cities, there are stores that cater to Middle Eastern ethnic groups.

According to some observers, ethnic food in the United States is becoming less and less authentic. In her study of later-generation Italian Americans, di Leonardo found that there was little regional loyalty (i.e., North Italians would bake Sicilian cookies) and no "typical Italian foods" that all her respondents included on their menus for special occasions. She argued that "aside from the proliferation of Italian-named food stuffs, these family holiday patterns seem typically American Christian" (1984, 218). New York respondents too were uncertain about what would be considered typical Armenian food. A fifty-five-year-old third-generation women said her family ate Armenian food at home almost every day, adding: "If you count pilaf." A forty-three-year-old male respondent whose mother is a U.S.-born Armenian and his father English reported that they eat Armenian food almost daily "at least one dish every meal" and cook thirteen to twenty-four dishes and "probably more but do not think of them as 'Armenian.'"

An emergent Armenian-American cuisine is accommodating "American," Middle Eastern, and other dishes and traditions. The more pungent spices and other objectionable ingredients have been tamed or eliminated to adapt to the American palate, which has been described as bland, even tasteless (Steinberg 1981, 64). California-

made *pasterma* (dried beef with garlic, tumeric and other spices) no longer leaves undesirable odors.[23] Also, *hommos* (chick pea dip with sesame seed oil), *taboulé* (parsley and mint salad) and *baba ghanouj* (egg plant salad), which are Lebanese, not Armenian, specialities are becoming standard items on Armenian menus in private homes and public affairs. Even the most recent Armenian immigrants seem to borrow dietary customs rather quickly from their host environment. Typically, at Thanksgiving, which is celebrated almost universally, a roast turkey graces the table. However, instead of (or rather, in addition to) sweet potatoes with marshmallows and cranberry sauce, rice pilaf, *boreog*, and stuffed vine leaves accompany the bird.

The specialized skills of Armenian grandmothers in rolling dough for baklava or cheese *boreog* may be a thing of the past. Packaged substitutes (such as *filo* or streudel dough) are readily available, making the cook's task easier and faster. Also easily available are canned (e.g., stuffed vine leaves) and frozen foods (e.g., *lahmejoun).* In addition, no Armenian-American anywhere in the United States need crave Armenian food. Mail-order firms can ship most staples within a day or two, even ready-to-eat goods. As for the cooking enthusiasts, those who turn their love of Armenian food into a hobby, there are a large number of cookbooks, in English with simple instructions and standard measures.[24] As a fifty-eight-year-old, second-generation respondent commented, she could cook over twenty-five Armenian dishes "with a little help of my cookbook."

I was able to enumerate fifteen Armenian cookbooks in English currently on the market. The oldest was published in 1949 by the Detroit chapter of an Armenian philanthropic association. There were three books published in the 1960s, one in 1975, and the rest (ten) in the 1980s. Of the fifteen, twelve were single authored, all but one by women; three women having written more than one book. Three cookbooks were group projects by Armenian churches or voluntary associations. One book was published in England, one in Beirut (Lebanon), the remaining thirteen in the United States. The question is: Why this surge in cookbooks in the United States in the 1980s? The resurgence of ethnicity popularizing ethnic cuisine, the women's movement encouraging women to achieve something for themselves,[25] the immigration of large numbers of Armenians from

the Middle East (several of the authors are from the Middle East) are some of the possible motivating factors.

I suggest though that the proliferation of Armenian cookbooks published in English in the last few years is a by-product of becoming symbolic ethnics. A need develops to "store," to codify the ethnic culture in some permanent form, because one feels that it is being "lost." The traditional techniques and know-how are no longer taken for granted or perpetuated automatically from mother to daughter because of lack of time, interest, or break in the human chain. Therefore, this body of knowledge has to be documented for posterity, so that future generations (and non-Armenian spouses) may have the possibility of learning from it, if they so wish. Cookbooks are not an isolated phenomena. Armenians have written books on traditional lace embroidery and rugs; they have recorded patterns in folk costumes, folk dancing, and so on. In the last chapter, I called these "knowledge banks." The only difference is that cookbooks have a higher utility value, more popular appeal, and may be more profitable for authors and publishers.

Cookbooks, and, to a lesser extent other manuals of traditional Armenian culture, have another function. They establish an emergent Armenian-American culture, a common ethnic culture among a variety of Armenians from different regions of ancient Armenia and the diaspora. As I have argued above, Armenian-American cuisine now includes Lebanese, American, and other dishes and traditions. Cookbooks not only explain the secrets of *taboulé, baba ghanouj,* and stuffed turkey with cranberry sauce, they popularize and legitimize their inclusion in the Armenian-American culinary repertoire.

Similarly, a standardized Armenian-American menu is emerging in most banquets and dinner dances hosted by Armenian associations. Typically, the appetizer consists of cheese *boreog* or *hommos* or stuffed vine leaves, or a combination of these. The main course is usually lamb or beef, though chicken is also common, accompanied by rice or *bulghour* [crushed wheat] pilaf and vegetables (peas or string beans) or a salad (lettuce, tomato, and cucumber). Occasionally, a yogurt and cucumber dish replaces the salad. Desert is baklava or one of its numerous varieties (see also Ordjanian 1991, 202-4). Such a menu would have been alien to pre-Genocide Armenians, as it is to others in

the diaspora today. However, it fits all the necessary requirements of American society; it is different without being offensive.

In conclusion, the pattern is clear. In spite of a general acceptance and availability of Armenian and Middle Eastern food, the longer the generational presence in the United States, the less Armenian cuisine constitutes an integral part of a family's daily diet and the fewer dishes one is able to cook. The following quotation from a seventy-seven-year-old respondent (born in Greece, who immigrated at age twelve) illustrates the trend.

> Since my wife was born in the U.S.A. of Aintabtzi [from Aintab, Turkey] parents the "Armenian" part of our food consists of pilaf, dolma, lahmejoun, home-made yogurt. When my parents lived it was different. It was then *ALL* Armenian.

Nonetheless, Armenian cuisine continues to be popular when readily available. The preparation of such dishes at home is relegated to special occasions, family get-togethers or holidays such as Christmas and Easter, even American ones like Thanksgiving.

For symbolic Armenian-Americans eating Armenian food occasionally is the most convenient form of participation in their ancestral heritage. Armenian food can be eaten at a family celebration, in an Armenian restaurant, at a street fair; it can be bought at a local supermarket, or a Middle Eastern speciality store, or ordered through the mail. The choices abound. With minimal commitment, the experience is almost always immensely gratifying. Moreover, food conjures images of childhood memories, of festive occasions with tables piled up with colorful dishes and succulent tastes, pungent aromas emanating from the kitchen, grandmother's comforting voice mixed with sounds of laughter and music. Such mental images come to represent for symbolic Armenian-Americans what it feels like to be of Armenian descent. Food occupies center stage in these cognitive reconstructions. In the final analysis, the essence of Armenianness is felt with one's heart, and whenever possible one's palate.

## The Family

So far in this chapter, I have analyzed the sources that breed and invigorate Armenian identity in the United States. The family unit is the repository of Armenian culture and the web of social relations. As an agent of socialization, the role of the family in passing Armenian

identity and pride to the next generation is undeniable. Given the sidestream nature of ethnicity, it is my contention that at the individual level, the family will remain the most significant, and in some cases the only, tie of later-generation men and women of Armenian descent to their ancestral heritage. Even though the maintenance of a viable collective presence requires more than the contributions of the family, ultimately the future of Armenianness in the United States may well depend on its performance. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the characteristics of the Armenian-American family system and examine the nature of its social relations.

### *The Changing Patterns of the Traditional Armenian Family*

It has been argued that second only to social class, ethnicity causes the major variations in the American kinship structure (Schneider 1980, 122). In the Armenian case, these differences are minor, and likely to diminish with time. The contemporary Armenian-American family is not different from the "American" family in its structure or functions. Its distinguishing features lie in emphases on certain values, norms, and behavioral patterns retained from the original immigrants and the emergent ethnic subculture in the United States.[26] What is the legacy of the present-day Armenian-American family? What were the characteristics of the early twentieth-century family? How have they changed?

The pre-Genocide family *(endanik)* in historic Armenia has been portrayed as patriarchal, patrilineal, patrilocal, and patrinomial (see Bamberger 1986-87; LaPiere 1930; Mazian 1983, 1984; Nelson 1953; Villa and Matossian 1982; and for a bibliography of the Armenian family see Bakalian 1985). Power and authority rested in the hands of the male elders of the family. A child's welfare was the responsibility of his/her father's family. An Armenian father passed on his identity to his children, irrespective of their mother's ethnic background. In addition, children inherited the material and nonmaterial assets that their families enjoyed. The clan *(Kertasdan)* was a larger kin group that like a corporate body regulated family life, especially at times when the central government was weak. It provided extrafamilial protection, assistance during calamities, and mediated disputes. As in most agrarian economies, the Armenian family functioned as a unit of

production. In the villages and towns on the Anatolian Plateau, where the majority of the Armenian population lived until the deportations, family members labored jointly to produce the goods and services necessary for survival.

A strong sense of family honor, described as "Mediterranean" (Bamberger 1986-87, 81) focused on the purity of female members of the family. Fathers and brothers jealously guarded their honor by protecting female kin from illicit relationships with men. Marriages were arranged. Marriage between close kin was prohibited. Betrothal was at an early age for women. Age differences between the bride and groom were wide. Patrilocal residence patterns were the norm; after the wedding ceremony, the couple lived with the groom's family. In the extended household, the newlyweds were allocated a separate quarter, a room, or a corner of the domicile depending on their economic status. The bride *(hars)* served her in-laws in silence, and initially was not allowed to visit her family of origin for an extended period of time. She remained a junior member in her husband's household until the birth of a son. Given the high incidence of infant and childhood mortality, women gave birth to a large number of children to ensure that a few would survive into adulthood. With more children and increasing age, her position was elevated, and her authority increased over junior members in domestic matters. After menopause and the acquisition of the status of mother-in-law, some women attained significant respect and authority within the household and community.

The Genocide, migration, and forces of modernization changed the structure and functions of the Armenian family. Nelson's (1953) analysis of three generations of Armenian-American families in Fresno (CA) outlines the distinguishing themes of the early immigrant family. Child rearing was characterized by discipline, "strictness," and obedience to parental authority (Nelson 1953, 49, 157). Elders were highly respected and initially, there was a reluctance to place elderly parents in old people's homes because it was considered shameful[27] (Nelson 1953, 82). The family unit, often consisting of grandparents, parents, and children, was described as close-knit (Nelson 1953, 173); moreover, members were reported to "do things together" as a group (Nelson 1953, 41). An important leisure-time activity that was practiced over several generations was visiting. On Sundays or holidays,

parents visited kin, compatriots, and friends, and they took their children with them. Nonetheless, Nelson observes that this was "a family unified by parental pressure." It was an adult-centered family and "children were fitted into [their parents'] program" (Nelson 1953, 44 ).

The family name and its reputation in the ethnic community were important values in Armenian lives (Nelson 1953, 125-26). Concern for the family name is typically the product of a folklike, face-to-face society where knowledge of other people's behavior is pervasive. In such societies, the collectivity sanctions normative behavior by gossip, ridicule, even ostracism. The immigrant Armenian family was responsible for the behavior of its members. Armenian children were taught at an early stage not to discredit the family, or cause disunity in its midst by any behavior that would bring shame *(amot)* to the family name. The concern for "what will people say?" was paramount in regulating social conduct and sanctioning deviant behavior (see also Boudjikanian-Keuroghlian 1978, 112). The "good" families were those whose reputations were untarnished. They were highly sought after for marriage alliances. When parents negotiated the marriages of their children, they made sure their son or daughter was not married into a family with a history of disease, illness, crime, laziness, avarice, scandal, divorce, desertion, and other such unsavory traits (Nelson 1953, 125).

Matchmaking continued to prevail as a mode of mate selection for the immigrant generation in the first half of the twentieth century (Nelson 1953, 150). "Picture brides" (Mirak 1983, 153) or "pen-pal couples" (Bamberger 1986-87, 84) were common. Immigrant men would send for wives they had seen only in a photograph; sometimes they would correspond, and sometimes they would travel back to Near Eastern orphanages or Marseille to choose a bride. Women continued to marry young and several years separated their ages from that of their husbands. Many of the New York respondents' parents and grandparents were married in this way. Here are some of their stories.

A second-generation respondent explained that her mother was placed in an orphanage after the massacres. Her father had escaped the Turkish army and settled in New York State. "Dad went to Corfu when given her picture by her cousin, who was father's brother-in-law. They liked each other and married." He was eighteen years older than his wife. Another second-generation man wrote: "Father went to

France—for a wife—mother and father married in an arranged marriage—father was thirty years old, mother was seventeen years old, when married." Yet another second-generation respondent wrote: "My mother and her mother were brought here by my father in 1923 and were married in 1924. She was introduced to my father by letter through my aunt (my mother's sister) who was already married and living in New York." And again, a second-generation mechanic said:

> My father arrived before the massacres and worked as a laborer. My mother went through the massacres and was saved by American missionaries and grew up in an American orphanage in Beirut. My father returned to Beirut with a friend. They both met and married Armenian girls there. My parents arrived in 1929 from Beirut and had three children, born here.

A young, third-generation man wrote:

> My grandfather on my mother's side saw a picture of my grandmother sometime after he came to this country. Back then all of the Armenians were particularly close and my grandfather knew her family and arranged for her to be sent here. My grandmother was sixteen and the oldest child in a family where the mother had died four years earlier. Therefore she felt a strong responsibility to stay but her father convinced her to go. After a journey lasting around one year, she arrived on Ellis Island in 1906. Although she had only just met my grandfather, she had to marry him there on the island in order to gain entry to the country. They had nine children and forty-three grandchildren.

The traditional Armenian value of female purity and virginity at marriage lingered in disguise in American society during the early period (Nelson 1953, 73). Arranged marriages after the first generation gave way to chaperoned dating and eventually—by the third generation—to more "casual" dating (Nelson 1953, 115). Young Armenian boys and girls were characterized by "shyness" because they did not mix easily (Nelson 1953, 113-14). Armenian men preferred marriage partners "who have not 'been around' very much" (Nelson 1953, 73). Armenian women could not date "indiscriminately"; an "easy date" was considered not marriageable (Nelson 1953, 79, 127). Intention of marriage was a prerequisite for dating in order to avoid community gossip. Even though by the third generation dating among ethnic peers was substituted for parental matchmaking, Nelson observed, it was "fashioned and shaped by Armenian values" (1953, 173). That is, young Armenian men and women, unlike their nonethnic peers did not "experiment" with several partners; instead, they carefully narrowed

the field of eligible mates "to a minimum and then concentrate[d] on those few" (Nelson 1953, 174). Dating continued to be subject to parental approval in later generations.

Though Nelson found the power of the Armenian-American father in early generations to be absolute, the universality of this rule is disputable because with the death of a large proportion of the Armenian male population, in many families women must have filled the vacuum.[28] Armenian men and women growing up in the post-Genocide era remember matriarchal grandmothers dominating their images of their childhood. The Armenian grandmother continues to be a source of inspiration and prominent subject matter in the prose and poetry of Armenian-American authors.[29] For example, Dobkin writes: "My grandmother is a central figure in this world" (1977, 6) when she remembers the Armenian world of her youth. The grandparent is a symbol of the Genocide, of survival, of love. She is a link to the past, to one's roots, to one's identity. Some respondents also portrayed their Armenian mothers or grandmothers as powerful figures in their lives. The comments of a seventy-one-year-old, second-generation woman quoted in the previous chapter illustrate this: "My grandmother ruled as the grand matriarch in the household."

At present, the Armenian-American family is changing in the direction of equalitarian relationships between husbands and wives and between parents and children; neolocal residence (i.e., upon marriage spouses establish their own home); and descent is being traced bilineally through both parents. Parental influence remains strong, but the absolute authority of the historical Armenian patriarch has disappeared.[30] Young daughters-in-law no longer serve in silence, but cannot deny their in-laws from visiting their son and grandchildren without inviting their anger and gossip. Safeguarding the "good" name of the family and fear of being gossiped about is less meaningful in today's society where individuals inhabit a multitude of social worlds with insulated boundaries. In addition, the behavior of a daughter or a brother does not necessarily reflect upon the good standing of the family as it did in the past. Nonetheless, within communal circles, families still care about their reputation. They try to avoid losing face unnecessarily.

Relations between the sexes, mate selection, and courting are similar to conservative American norms. Those who are immersed in

the Armenian-American community tend to uphold more traditional values and norms. Avakian supports this claim by saying that "antiquated attitudes" continue to be prevalent at the collective level. "Armenian women ... [are] held to sexual standards much more restrictive than those for non-Armenian women" (1988, 2).[31] Matchmaking has almost disappeared, though kin and friends occasionally introduce eligible Armenian men and women to each other. Also, among the newest immigrants from the Middle East, one occasionally hears of foreign-born men officially asking a woman's hand in marriage before dating her.

Yet, the contemporary Armenian-American family continues to be a close knit unit. As I will show below, frequent contact is maintained with immediate kin. Even when relatives live far away from each other, making contact more time and energy consuming, close ties endure through telephone calls, occasional visits. Mutual assistance is the backbone of family cohesiveness; it varies from baby sitting services to substantial financial transfers. I find Bamberger's characterization of the modern Armenian-American family quite apt; what makes it somewhat different than other ethnic or mainstream American families is its "strong sense of family duty *[bardaganutiun]* and a continuing concern for family solidarity" (1986-87, 78).

### *Household Composition*

Nuclear families, with father, mother, and their children living under one roof, were most numerous in the New York sample (43.9 percent). The second largest category was couples living alone (22.5 percent); and third, respondents living alone (16.5 percent). The extended household or three-generational family consisted of less than 15 percent of the sample; it was highest among the immigrant generation. The remaining 2.3 percent, predominantly fourth generation, shared living arrangements with a nonrelative, often a friend or a lover (see table 5.14). It is interesting to note that the Armenian-American family has come a long way since its early immigrant origins when many households took on fee-paying boarders to supplement their income. This was a common occurrence among most immigrant groups during early twentieth-century America (for Armenians see Mirak 1983, 158; for other groups see Modell and

Hareven 1978). It is also worth noting that of the 5.3 percent of respondents who reported their exact relationship to their in-law in the extended household (2.1 percent did not), almost three times as many of the wife's father and/or mother lived with the nuclear family as did parents of the husband (3.9 percent vs 1.4 percent). As mentioned above, the opposite situation was the norm in the past.

The household composition of the respondents was statistically not significant with any of the assimilation variables, except for respondent's age (.17*) and stage in the household cycle (.38*; see

**TABLE 5.14**
**Frequency Distribution of Household Type by Generation**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 569 | (214) | (264) | (35) | (41) | (15) |
| Nuclear family | 42.1 | 42.0 | 65.7 | 46.3 | 40.0 |
| Extended family | 20.1 | 14.4 | 5.7 | 2.4 | 6.7 |
| Couple only | 19.6 | 26.9 | 11.4 | 24.4 | 6.7 |
| Single household | 16.8 | 15.5 | 14.3 | 19.5 | 26.7 |
| Nonkin household | 1.4 | 1.1 | 2.9 | 7.3 | 20.0 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

**TABLE 5.15**
**Frequency Distribution of Household Type by Household Cycle**

| | Single <40 yrs | Early Family | Child in School | Adult Child | Empty Nest | Single >41 yrs | Senior Citizen |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 569 | (33) | (34) | (160) | (101) | (105) | (60) | (76) |
| Nuclear family | 21.2 | 97.1 | 76.3 | 89.1 | 87.6 | 3.3 | 40.8 |
| Extended family | 9.1 | 2.9 | 22.5 | 10.9 | 12.4 | 28.3 | 5.3 |
| Single household | 45.5 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 63.3 | 53.9 |
| Nonkin household | 24.2 | 0.0 | 1.3 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 5.0 | 0.0 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

table 5.15). This means that the Armenian-American household structure varies with age and stages in the life cycle more than by generation. Young adults live alone or with a nonrelative; some continue to reside under the same roof as their family of origin. When young adults get married and start childbearing, the overwhelming majority establish neolocal residences. By the time a nuclear family has school-age or college-age children, older grandparents may move in. Other senior citizens maintain separate residences with a spouse or alone. There is nothing unusual about these arrangements. The Armenian-American family fits in with Winch and Kitson's conclusions that "there is and always has been a plurality of types of American families" (1977, 50).

### *Familism*

Two statements were used from Bardis's (1959) "Familism Scale" which measures strong family feelings, goals, and mutual support. The first statement read: "A person should always consider the needs of his family as a whole more important than his own." The second statement said: "A person should always help his parents with the support of his younger brothers and sisters if necessary." These values are reminiscent of the early Armenian families in Fresno that Nelson described just after World War II.

> [M]arried children felt obliged to assist their parents and they rendered economic assistance if necessary and kept them in the household without grumbling if this was necessary. Children maintaining close ties with their parents, did not consider marriage a device enabling them to move to a remote community away from their parents. Parents liked to have their married children near them, and most children complied by settling in Fresno and its surrounding area with visiting back and forth at least several times a week. (Nelson 1953, 55)

New York respondents reiterated that the family was important and one should help one's siblings. For example a third-generation respondent noted that his wife was non-Armenian, then went on to say,

> She recognized the uniqueness of being an Armenian the first time she went out with me. Unlike many other minorities the Armenians in this country have never lost sight of the value of the FAMILY; we hope to pass on that tradition to our six-month-old daughter.

Another middle-aged, third-generation respondent explained that his father-in-law had arrived to the United States at the age of sixteen and worked as a photoengraver, "first to support his parents and siblings and then his own family and his parents."

Armenian-Americans, irrespective of generations in the United States, maintain a very high regard for the family and its needs (see tables 5.16, 5.17). Almost 80 percent of respondents in the sample agreed that family needs take precedence over individual needs, and 86 percent agreed that people should assist parents with the support of younger brothers and sisters, when need be. Yet, there is a slight decrease by generation in agreement on both statements. Third- and fourth-generation respondents were less apt to agree than first- and second-generation respondents, but compared to other assimilation variables, these differences were minor. Overall, the statement on supporting siblings received slightly higher agreement responses than the other.[32]

Throughout this survey, gender differences have generally not been significant with most assimilation variables. Here is an exception (tau c .12 significant at .0001); twice as many women disagreed that family needs were more important than individual needs (22.9 percent vs 10.4 percent). The never-married, the separated, and divorced in the sample were also twice as likely to disagree as the married that family needs were more important than individual needs (31.4 percent, 26.7 percent respectively vs 13.7 percent). There was a straight-line increase by age in agreement with the statement that family needs are more important

**TABLE 5.16**
**Frequency Distribution of Attitude Statement: "A Person Should Always Consider the Needs of His Family as a whole More important than his own" by Generation**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 584 | (219) | (272) | (36) | (41) | (16) |
| Agree | 84.0 | 78.7 | 80.6 | 70.7 | 56.3 |
| No opinion | 4.1 | 4.8 | 0.0 | 2.4 | 12.5 |
| Disagree | 11.9 | 16.5 | 19.4 | 26.8 | 31.1 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

than one's own. The older the respondent, the more he or she was likely to agree that family needs should take precedence (31 percent of twenty year olds, 21 percent of forty year olds, 11 percent of sixty year olds and 7 percent of those over seventy disagreed with the statement). It can be concluded that, unlike the statement on supporting siblings, the statement on family needs is influenced by life status events not generational standing. A small group of independent women, singles and younger people—those who deviate from the marriage norm—are less likely to comply with family pressure, but such people are also least likely to reap the benefits of family life.

It is remarkable that supporting siblings and putting family needs before one's own continues to have high priority in the lives of men and women of Armenian descent. Nelson had found that one of the characteristics of the Armenian family unit was its closeness. He wrote: "Kinship is important, and informants speak of the warmth within Armenian families they don't believe exists in the families of their *odar* friends" (Nelson 1953,117-18). It is hypothesized in the ethnicity literature that with increasing generational presence in America, people feel closer to friends than to family; that is, ascriptive relations take second place to the more compatible relationships one establishes with nonkin. Is this true of Armenian-Americans?

Respondents were asked how many of the five people they felt closest to in their lives were family members; second, married respondents were asked how close they felt to their spouse's relatives. These correlations were statistically not significant with most of the

**TABLE 5.17**
**Frequency Distribution of Attitude Statement: "A Person Should Always Help His Parents with the Support of His Younger Brothers and Sisters if Necessary" by Generation**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 584 | (219) | (272) | (36) | (41) | (16) |
| Agree | 92.7 | 84.6 | 83.3 | 70.7 | 68.8 |
| No opinion | 3.6 | 7.7 | 8.3 | 7.3 | 12.5 |
| Disagree | 3.7 | 7.7 | 8.3 | 22.0 | 18.8 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

independent variables of the study (see tables 5.18, 5.19). Overall, only 18 percent of the sample did not feel close to any of their kin, about 33 percent felt close to one or two relatives, and the remaining 50 percent or so felt close to more than three (including 25.5 percent who felt close to all five).[33] It is interesting that there was a slight increase of about ten percentage points in feeling close to more than three family members by generation. This is in the opposite direction than predicted. On the other hand, there was a decrease in the predicted direction in feeling close to one's spouse's relatives. About half of the married sample did not feel close to their in-laws. The hypothesis that generational presence decreases one's feeling of closeness to one's kin group is refuted. Armenian-Americans repeatedly say they feel close to their family and would put its interests first, if necessary. They interpret the traditions of their ancestors to mean a sense of duty and solidarity toward their families.

### *Family Contacts*

To bridge the gap between attitudes and behavior, respondents were supplied with a list of the following relatives: father/mother, children, sister/brother, grandparents, in-laws, aunts/uncles, cousins, and nephews/nieces, and asked to indicate how many times in the two weeks prior to the survey they had seen or telephoned each set of kin (see table 5.20). To control for geographical distance, respondents were asked to name the city/state each set of relatives lived in.

**TABLE 5.18**
**Frequency Distribution of Respondents Feeling Closest to Five Relatives by Generation**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 541 | (191) | (261) | (34) | (39) | (16) |
| None | 22.0 | 16.1 | 11.8 | 20.5 | 12.5 |
| One or two | 30.4 | 33.7 | 44.1 | 29.2 | 31.3 |
| More than three | 47.6 | 50.2 | 44.1 | 50.3 | 56.3 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Distance was categorized into: same as respondent; adjacent (New England, Pennsylvania, Washington, DC); other states in the United States and Canada; and abroad (see table 5.21).

Out of the eight sets of kin provided by the questionnaire, Armenian-Americans are most likely to be in frequent contact with their children. All respondents who had children and did not live under one roof saw or phoned their children at least once in the two weeks prior to the study. Almost a third of them had contact with their children every day, and another quarter had contact at least every other day. Parents were next; a third of all respondents whose parents were still alive saw or phoned their parents every other day or more frequently. Of the six respondents (2.5 percent) who had no contact whatsoever with their parents, five were foreign-born and their parents lived abroad, and one was a third-generation respondent whose parents were in another state. Siblings were the third most frequent kin respondents maintained contact with. While only 11 percent saw or talked to a brother or sister every day, over 70 percent did so once to seven times in two weeks.

It is interesting that Armenian-American kin relations are in sharp contrast to those reported for the English. According to Allan, secondary kin such as aunts, uncles, nephews, nieces in England were considered of "little importance in people's patterns of sociability." They were seen "comparatively rarely, and when interaction [... occurred it was] often perceived as a consequence of fortuitous

**TABLE 5.19**
**Frequency Distribution of Respondents Feeling Closest to Five In-Laws by Generation**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 543 | (191) | (262) | (34) | (39) | (16) |
| None | 50.3 | 53.4 | 55.9 | 50.0 | 50.0 |
| One or two | 29.3 | 21.8 | 17.6 | 15.0 | 6.3 |
| More than three | 9.4 | 9.9 | 5.9 | 2.5 | 0 |
| Not applicable | 11.0 | 14.9 | 20.6 | 32.5 | 43.8 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

circumstances rather than conscious design" (1979, 111-12). I have no information on whether contact with secondary kin is fortuitous for Armenian-Americans. However, over two-thirds of the sample had contacts with aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews, and nieces at least once or twice in the two weeks before the survey (see table 5.18). This indicates a fairly busy kin circle. The majority of the sample had relatives living in the same city and state. Only about 5 percent of respondents had kin living abroad. Children were the least likely to be abroad and grandparents the most. This reflects the continuous chain of migration of younger family members followed by older ones.

**TABLE 5.20**
**Frequency Distribution of Times Family Members Contacted in Two Weeks Prior to Survey by Kinship Categories**

| | Parent | Child | Sibling | Grand-parent | In-Laws | Nephew/ Niece | Aunt/ Uncle | Cousin |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N.A. | (327) | (329) | (140) | (508) | (293) | (206) | (314) | (171) |
| N = | (240) | (243) | (414) | (50) | (265) | (342) | (235) | (375) |
| Zero | 2.5 | 0.0 | 7.5 | 50.0 | 13.9 | 23.7 | 33.2 | 31.5 |
| 1-2 | 29.9 | 16.9 | 42.5 | 26.0 | 47.9 | 43.9 | 45.5 | 40.0 |
| 3-7 | 35.4 | 29.2 | 28.7 | 18.0 | 24.5 | 23.4 | 15.7 | 22.6 |
| 8-13 | 15.8 | 25.1 | 10.1 | 4.0 | 7.9 | 6.1 | 2.5 | 2.9 |
| Daily | 16.6 | 28.8 | 11.1 | 2.0 | 5.7 | 2.9 | 3.0 | 2.9 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

**TABLE 5.21**
**Frequency Distribution of Times Family Members Contacted in Two Weeks Prior to Survey by Geographical Location**

| | Parent | Child | Sibling | Grand-parent | In-Laws | Nephew/ Niece | Aunt/ Uncle | Cousin |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N. A. | (327) | (329) | (140) | (508) | (293) | (206) | (314) | (171) |
| N = | (236) | (247) | (392) | (43) | (246) | (284) | (193) | (314) |
| Same | 77.1 | 75.1 | 70.9 | 65.1 | 74.4 | 72.9 | 67.9 | 71.3 |
| Near | 7.6 | 10.1 | 9.9 | 11.6 | 10.6 | 12.0 | 8.8 | 10.8 |
| Far | 9.7 | 13.7 | 15.1 | 11.6 | 11.8 | 12.0 | 17.6 | 12.8 |
| Abroad | 5.5 | 1.3 | 4.1 | 11.6 | 3.2 | 3.1 | 5.6 | 5.1 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

When controlled for geographical distance, foreign-born respondents were most likely to see or talk to their children (see table 5.22). They were also more likely to contact their parents (see table 5.23) and siblings (see table 5.24) very often. Keeping in touch with family members diminishes with each succeeding generation for those living

**TABLE 5.22**
**Frequency Distribution of Respondents Contacting Their Children by Generation, Controlled for Geographical Distance**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent + U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|
| Same city | | | |
| N = 179 | (67) | (101) | (11) |
| 1 to 7 times | 29.9 | 42.6 | 63.6 |
| 8 times to daily | 70.1 | 57.4 | 36.3 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Other (excluding abroad) | | | |
| N = 58 | (14) | (43) | (1) |
| 1 to 7 times | 71.4 | 81.4 | 100.0 |
| 8 times to daily | 28.6 | 18.6 | 0.0 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

**TABLE 5.23**
**Frequency Distribution of Respondents Contacting Their Parents by Generation, Controlled for Geographical Distance**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent + U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|
| Same city | | | |
| N = 180 | (54) | (71) | (55) |
| 1 to 7 times | 57.4 | 66.2 | 65.5 |
| 8 times to daily | 42.6 | 33.8 | 34.5 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Other (excluding abroad) | | | |
| N = 40 | (9) | (14) | (17) |
| 1 to 7 times | 100.0 | 92.9 | 88.2 |
| 8 times to daily | 0.0 | 7.1 | 11.8 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

in the same geographical area. There are less discernable patterns for those who do not live in same place. It is interesting that women were in contact with kin more frequently than men. They were twice as likely as men to keep in touch with siblings every other day or more times in a fortnight; the relationship is slightly more significant when controlled for the same city or state (35 percent vs 18 percent for same place, 10 percent vs 4 percent for distant location; tau c .18 significant at .0003 level).

This is not surprising; keeping in touch with family members comprises what has been called "the work of kin" which women do for the family without being recognized for it. In the same category are sending birthday cards, buying Christmas presents, cooking holiday meals and taking care of elderly relatives. On the other hand, when siblings live in other states, younger people are more likely to have frequent contact with them than older people (33.3 percent of twenty year olds compared to 26.7 percent of thirty year olds, 5 percent of forty year olds and 3.2 percent of fifty year olds). Keeping in touch with one's children does not vary by socioeconomic status, but the higher the class the slightly less the contact with siblings, and parents.

**TABLE 5.24**
**Frequency Distribution of Respondents Contacting Their Siblings by Generation, Controlled for Geographical Distance**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent + U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|
| Same city | | | |
| N = 277 | (80) | (142) | (55) |
| Zero | 1.3 | 2.8 | 3.6 |
| 1 to 7 times | 61.3 | 75.4 | 81.8 |
| 8 times or daily | 37.5 | 21.8 | 14.5 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Other (excluding abroad) | | | |
| N = 98 | (33) | (46) | (19) |
| Zero | 9.1 | 10.9 | 26.3 |
| 1 to 7 times | 81.8 | 87.0 | 57.9 |
| 8 times or daily | 9.1 | 2.2 | 15.8 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

In sum, the majority of Armenian-Americans say they feel close to their family members; their behavior affirms it, more or less. Parents and children are most often in contact with each other, siblings come next, especially for younger people. The comments of the respondents support these findings. A thirty-year-old third-generation woman wrote, "While growing up our family (parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, sisters/brothers) was close. This closeness and love continues today." Another third-generation, middle-aged lady said: "I was raised very Armenian. All Armenian friends and our social life was with our family basically." Generation was not significant with feelings of closeness to family members; however, it was more significant with actual behavior. This confirms the hypothesis that later-generation Armenian-Americans maintain high levels of affect but are low on actual behavior. It appears that this is also true in family relations.

Family contacts change with stages in the life cycle. The birth of a baby increases communication, and the death of a parent reduces it. A young mother whose mother is U.S.-born, and husband and father non-Armenian wrote: "Always close to immediate family especially mine, but with newborn baby seeing them even more often." On the other hand, a middle-aged, second-generation woman wrote: "We had a great family life. Went to Hantese [festive parties] every Sunday as a family—family gatherings. After parents passed away, the closeness lessened. But still keep in touch with all my mother's relatives."

Geographical distance and economic conditions are also important in family contacts. A second-generation respondent explained that his mother was an orphan. "Her sister ended up in California. I saw her

TABLE 5.25
**Frequency Distribution of Visiting Armenians When Growing Up by Generation**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 582 | (217) | (272) | (36) | (41) | (16) |
| Hardly ever | 5.1 | 5.9 | 11.1 | 19.5 | 43.8 |
| Some of the time | 13.8 | 27.6 | 38.8 | 51.2 | 37.5 |
| Almost always | 81.1 | 66.5 | 50.0 | 29.3 | 18.8 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

once when I was nine.... My father's brother also went to California and since we were definitely not affluent we were not able to see each other." On the other hand, a first-generation respondent was luckier because his parents were more affluent. Here is his story: "I had no [Armenian] friends as such as we lived in Mineola, LI, completely detached from Hyes [Armenians]. But our family always associated with Hyes all the time; we'd visit, they'd come to our home. I had one close friend.... We met at the Catskills (where our families vacationed)."

*Visiting*

The last question in this section analyzes the imbeddedness of the respondent's family in the informal Armenian network of friends, acquaintances, compatriots, and second cousins while he or she was growing up.[34] It is important to measure a family's bridges with the wider Armenian-American community because such contacts allow a child additional opportunities to reinforce his/her ethnic identity and provide the possibility of getting involved in the collective manifestation of Armenianness. For three generations of Armenian-Americans in Fresno some forty years ago, "visiting, with the children accompanying their parents, and being visited ... [was] one of the most frequent recreational pursuits of the family" (Nelson 1953, 51; and 84-117 for second- and third-generation visiting).

The findings of the New York study corroborate the importance of visiting. Overall, 67 percent of the sample did so most of the time, while only about 8 percent hardly ever visited Armenian families when they were growing up (see table 5.25). The informal ties of the Armenian-American family with fellow ethnics diminish with each succeeding generation (24*). Nonetheless, a significant proportion of third- and fourth-generation respondents were exposed to other Armenians during their formative years.

Visiting Armenians while growing up was also highly significant with religious affiliation, sympathy to Armenian political parties, and mixed ancestry. For example, 5 percent of those with two Armenian parents hardly ever visited Armenians versus 30 percent of those with mixed ancestry (.16*). Again, almost 4 percent of Armenian Apostolics and Protestants hardly ever visited other Armenians compared to

20 percent of those with non-Armenian religious affiliations and 11 percent of those with "no religion." This leads me to deduce that respondents with "no religion" were brought up within the ethnic community but have since moved away from collective manifestations of Armenianness; by contrast, those with non-Armenian denominational affiliations have had less of an ethnic socialization while growing up. In sum, the data reveals that the immigrant family and the second-generation family are almost totally immersed in the Armenian world of family, kin, friends, and acquaintances. Visiting each other is a central activity in this informal network; it decreases somewhat in intensity by the third and later generations.

In conclusion, the Armenian-American family remains the hub of social exchanges, mutual assistance, and affection. Such close ties cannot but engender positive associations in the minds of its members. Descendants of the immigrant generation have a high regard for their parents and grandparents and value the hard work and dedication that contributed to their present well-being and status. Maintaining Armenian identity is the debt they owe to their forebears. For their sake or for their memory, they feel strongly about Armenia and the Armenians. But this commitment to the past does not translate into action very easily, nor is it allowed to become an obsession. It should be noted that the New York study is a typical portrayal of the first three generations, it does not do justice to the subsequent generations, nor does it predict the future. I suspect, however, that with the passing away of the immigrant generation, those in fourth and fifth generations will have fewer opportunities to develop a sense of moral responsibility either toward their ancestors or their heritage.

The family unit with its social ties and its traditions embodies an important source of Armenian identity, which it tries to pass down to next generation. Without the support of educational, religious, and other formal institutions, parents and grandparents can teach their children to identify themselves as Armenian-Americans; to be proud of their cultural background and the achievements of their people, to feel a sense of kinship to fellow Armenians in the diaspora; to be outraged by the Genocide, even develop animosity toward the Turks for its denial; to have a weakness for Armenian cuisine; to sporadically participate in communal endeavors or at least to contribute financially to Armenian concerns. In sum, they can teach

the next generation to *feel* Armenian rather than *be* Armenian. Given the parameters of American society, this is what most people can and will probably do.

Men and women of Armenian descent in the present-day United States are happy to identify with their ancestral background and perpetuate their heritage as long as it is in the sidestream. Insofar as Armenianness does not come into conflict with the serious business of earning a living, one's allegiance to the United States, and the American Dream, Armenian-Americans will continue to express their pride and sentiments in people and things Armenian. The results of the New York study corroborate Barthel's very poignant observations:

> In sum, respondents seem to feel that ethnicity should remain on the "team sports" level of identification—it should give you someone to root for when what is at stake seems little more than a game. It becomes a basis for choice on election day when a choice must be made among candidates for minor office and there is no information to go on beyond name. It becomes the basis for celebrations when an Italian boy "makes good" on the athletic field or a Greek girl becomes an award-winning actress; the feeling that he or she is "one of us" adds to the excitement.... When this choosing-up of sides deepens, then people feel that it is carrying a good thing too far; they believe ethnic identification should be left as a matter of games and sentiment, not elevated to a level where it affects important decisions. (Barthel 1978, 114)

In this chapter, I have shown that identification, pride and sense of peoplehood do not decrease significantly with the passing of generations, with non-Armenian denominational affiliation or "no religion," with indifference to Armenian politics, or mixed ancestry. The majority of the respondents in the New York study identified themselves as Armenian-Americans. They felt extremely proud to be of Armenian descent. They rejoiced when they heard or recognized the names of men and women of Armenian descent who were successful in the arts, media, science, business, sports, or politics. They cherished their Armenian family name like a heirloom and said they would not change it to sound less ethnic. When they encountered other Armenians on their travels or visited historic lands, they felt strong bonds of kinship.

What do these patterns mean? Why do men and women of Armenian descent continue to identify with their ancestral heritage and maintain a sense of peoplehood? Unlike language, communal involvement, ethnic politics, and so on, I suggest identity and sense of

peoplehood in one's ethnic background are maintained for two reasons. One is changes in the nature of ethnicity paralleling the group's social mobility. From an ascribed, behavioral, traditional identity ethnicity becomes a voluntary, emotional, symbolic identity. Two, greater tolerance, even popularity of folkloric or sidestream ethnicity in America. Ethnicity provides much-needed excitement and rituals to an otherwise bland, homogenizing culture.

Sense of peoplehood, the Genocide, Armenian cuisine and the family are sources that nourish and energize Armenian identity in the contemporary United States. Pride in the accomplishments of fellow Armenians enhances the value of the collectivity, it proves that one descends from a group of talented, creative, smart, hardworking people. Traveling to the "spiritual homeland" is a leisure-time, sporadic occurrence that is likely to heighten one's sense of roots while it satisfies one's adventurous spirit and pursuit of pleasure. The Genocide and its denial by Turkish governments makes Armenian-Americans very angry and arouses their sense of justice and equity. It is one of the rare issues that touches the hearts of nearly all Armenian-Americans. Yet, participation in commemorative events is far below the level of affect. Symbolic Armenian-Americans have strong feelings, but are not likely to transform their sentiments into action

Armenian cuisine continues to be enjoyed by Armenian-Americans, though more people eat it than cook it, and instead of being the daily diet, it is relegated to special occasions and family reunions. Yet food is one of the most convenient methods of satisfying one's urge to belong in one's ancestral world with minimum probability of disappointment. Ultimately, the burden of the perpetuation of Armenianness in the United States rests on the family. The New York sample indicates that the contemporary Armenian-American family is a close-knit unit, characterized by frequent contact among immediate kin, and a strong sense of obligation and concern for the welfare of its members. Most significantly, the family breeds Armenian identity and we-ness through a personal sense of love and obligation toward one's parents and grandparents. Overall, the family remains an important component in the lives of the men and women who participated in this study and the root of Armenian feelings, pride, and identity.

## Notes

1. According to De Vos and Romanucci-Ross (1982, 18-24), there are three types of group allegiance, those that are ideological or future-oriented such as revolutionary or religious movements; the functional or present-oriented loyalties to a state or occupation; and the past-oriented commitments to family and cultural heritage of which ethnicity is a prime example.
2. For instance, presently in the United States, most children acknowledge the ethnic background of both their parents, i.e., bilineally. Whereas in unilineal societies, descent can be traced only partilineally, i.e., through one's father (e.g., most Middle Eastern societies), or only matrilineally, i.e., through one's mother (e.g., some West African tribes).
3. Alter-casting is defined as way people cast others in roles that fit the scenario they want to enact (see Lyman and Douglas 1973, 358).
4. David Luhrssen, "A non-Armenian Comments — Why the Armenian Church?" *Armenian Reporter*, 9 May 1991, p. 3.
5. See the *Armenian Reporter*, 17 March 1988, p. 3 - letter to the editor.
6. Given the fact that the survey was specifically on Armenians, it probably induced more respondents to check the "American-Armenian" category. These same individuals may have used other identity tags under different circumstances.
7. Other ethnic groups portray similar tendencies to identify themselves as hyphenated Americans. For example, for Lebanese-Maronite communities in Detroit see Ahdab-Yahia (1980, 150); for Italians in Bridgeport, see Crispino (1980, 97); for Chaldeans in Detroit see Sengstock (1969).
8. This is similar to the distinction made in chapter 2 between mechanical and organic types of ethnic solidarity.
9. These views were aired at an Open University Seminar organized by The Zoryan Institute, held at Columbia University, 24 January 1987. The seminar was chaired by Prof. Khachig Tölölyan.
10. Other examples of ex-roles provided by Ebaugh are ex-nuns, ex-doctors, divorcées, widows, alumni, ex-alcoholics, transsexuals, etc.
11. See also Dr. Puzant Hadidian, "Turkish Invasion of Armenian Family Names," *Armenian Reporter*, 13 February 1986, pp. 3, 12.
12. For example, my own family name, Bakalian, is Turkish, meaning "grocer."
13. It should be noted that some Persian names also end with "ian." However, it is usually not too difficult to recognize the difference; Armenians would not call their child Ali or Mohammad.
14. See the *Armenian Reporter*, e.g., 12 September 1985; 4 September 1986; 4 December 1986; 19 and 26 March 1987; 2 and 9 April 1987; and "Another Armenian Successfully Climbs Mt. Ararat," 6 August 1987 . A video film of this historic climb, narrated by Mike Connors is now on sale for $49.00 (see ad in *Armenian International Magazine*, July 1990, p. 15).
15. The film was produced by WGBH, Boston in 1988 with funding from the Alex and Marie Manoogian Foundation, the Louise Simone Fund, and public television viewers.
16. For example, the Diocese is sponsoring a pilgrimage to the Cathedral of Echmiadzin to witness the making of *Holy Muron* (holy oil ceremoniously mixed once every seven years), and a audience with the Catholicos in October 1991.

Also see ad in *Armenian International Magazine*, June 1991, p. 55.

17. Like the Armenians, the Jews and Greeks have their own diasporas. Describing the Hellenic case, Moskos elaborates on the concept: "The paradigm of the diaspora is that one's cultural roots and political sensitivities must be nourished by a responsiveness to contemporary Greek realities — even at a distance. The underlying presumption is that, whether residing or even born in the United States, Greeks in America share a destiny somehow connected with other people who call themselves Hellenes" (1989, 145-46).
18. For example, major fund-raising campaigns were targeted to help the impoverished Lebanese Armenians. See "Lebanon in Financial Turmoil," *Armenian Reporter*, 19 November 1987; and *Outreach* 10, 7 (November 1987). The major thrust is now geared toward the Republic of Armenia.
19. See Kerop Bayman "Impressions of a Visit to Argentina & Brazil: From South America with Love," *Armenian Reporter*, 19 February 1987, pp. 4 and 13. The writer, upon arriving in Rio de Janeiro called up Armenian names from the telephone directory to find out that there were approximately 100 families of Armenian descent, most of whom did not speak Armenian. There was no Armenian church in Rio de Janeiro, nor an organized community.
20. For example, one of them has written that "it is pitiful to see the Genocide being the only common issue to all Armenians and probably the only one which could enhance some type of national consciousness among Armenians, [it] has not been exploited as a most important political issue" (Keoseyan 1981, 70).
21. See Mary Ann Aposhian. "Clinging to Ethnic Heritage in America: Study Compares Extent of Assimilation between Earlier Generation, New Arrivals." *Armenian International Magazine*, February 1991, pp. 33-36.
22. Colombo's yogurt company was established by an Armenian from Massachusetts who sold the company for a sizable profit in recent years.
23. Likewise, according to the survey of Armenian restaurants quoted above, the chef of Sayat Nova in Chicago told the reporter that she "strives 'to make Armenian food more palatable to the American public'" (*Armenian International Magazine*, June 1991, p. 34).
24. Traditionally, Armenian cooks rarely weighed or measured their ingredients. Long years of practice had taught them to cook by "instinct" — *atchkee chap* (eye measure).
25. Following the lead of American chefs who have gained celebrity and fortune by going on (public and cable) television, a few enterprising cooks have videotaped their Armenian culinary techniques. These cassettes are advertised in the ethnic press.
26. For parallels with Greek-Americans see Kourvetaris (1981, 185).
27. Elkholy (1981, 158) corroborates that Arab-Americans shun nursing homes for their aged parents. According to the *Armenian American Almanac* (1990) there are eight Armenian old people's homes in the United States that offer a variety of services, including one in New Jersey and one in Queens. I asked the director of the New Jersey facility whether the notion that it is a shame to place one's elderly parents in an institution still prevailed. I was told that it was true in the past, but not any more.
28. Writer and poet Lorne Shirinian (1990) who has analyzed Armenian-North American literature makes an interesting analogy. He found that the father figure seems to be absent in most writings and sons seem to be abandoned. He attributes

this to the state of being in a diaspora, loss of territory, and gradual disappearance of language.

29. At a conference entitled "Armenian-American Literature: Old and New Directions," organized by The Armenian Center and The Columbia University Program in Armenian Studies, at Columbia University, New York City, 9 April 1988, a group of six fiction writers and three poets (all U.S.-born, second and third generation) observed the major influence their Armenian grandmothers (and grandfathers) had had in their lives and in their writings. Women authors, slightly more than men, emphasized the role their grandmothers had played in their lives. For a sample of Armenian-American fiction, see special issue of *Ararat* 28, 2 (Spring 1987). The mother/grandmother figure is of course not unique to Armenians; Gans (1962, 33) suggests that her role in ethnic maintenance is related to the importance of food in the family and her responsibility in cooking it (see also Fishman 1985, 503; Schneider 1980, 5).

30. Education professor Pergrouhi Svajian observes that vestiges of the authoritarian system survive today. Instead of reprimanding children with *amot eh* (shame, shame) and *mekhk eh* (pity, pity), she suggests that parents and educators in Armenian schools should develop children's individualism, initiative, and independence. She argues that it might have been functional in an agrarian traditional society under Ottoman rule exert authoritarian control; however, this is not the case in modern society where roles are no longer fixed and stable over time. Rather she points out flexibility and adaptability are valued in today's economic and social system. Svajian also notes that family relations in present-day Armenia remain extremely traditional, patriarchal. For example, even among the highly educated professional families, sons do not help themselves to water when thirsty, even when a faucet is nearby. Instead they demand that the (equally well-educated) *hars* (daughter-in-law) serve them. Moreover, daughters-in-law are rarely called by their names, they are beckoned by the generic *hars*. See Pergrouhi Svajian, "Three Faces of Parent-Child Relationship," *Nor Gyank* 13, 1 (20 December 1990): 25.

31. Similar observations were made in a study of French-Armenians over a decade earlier. Boudjikanian-Keuroghlian argues that the double standard of morality in the Armenian community allows Armenian men to date French women freely, but more conservative standards are set for women who were taught to be "honorable et vertueuse." The author goes on to suggest that this has produced confusion and ambiguity between personal aspirations and traditional upbringing and has inflated the rates of mixed marriages. "Le dépassement de ces contradictions aboutit au mariage mixte pour les uns et pour les autres. Il s'est créé un déphasage entre les convictions traditionelles et les aspirations individuelles actuelles que ni les familles — qualifiées de "vieux jeu" par les jeunes — ni la nouvelle génération n'arrivent à atténuer" (1978, 112).

32. Kassees (1972) used Bardis's Familism Scale on two samples of Christian Arabs from Ramallah, Occupied West Bank (Israel); one group was living in the original hometown, the other in the United States. Most significantly, the study found that Ramallah emigrés scored higher on the familism scale than those who had remained in the native land. The author suggests: "Familistic attitudes, instead of disappearing, become more emphasized when an ethnic group moves from its familistic culture to an individualistic one" (Kassees 1972, 543). For extended familism among upper-middle-class suburban Jews, see Winch, Greer

and Blumberg (1967).

33. The comparative percentages for Italian-Americans in Crispino's (1980, 81) study show that 41 percent of his respondents felt close to three or more of their relatives and only 7 percent felt close to their spouse's relatives. The straight-line model fits the Italian-American case better than the Armenian-American one.
34. The question was: "While you were growing up, did you and your family visit other Armenians excluding relatives?"

# 6

# Conclusions: Intermarriage, Symbolic Armenianness

The marriage of men and women of Armenian descent with non-Armenians *(odars)* is assumed to be the key to assimilation that will obliterate Armenian presence in the United States—the final straw on the camel's back, so to speak. It is perceived as the culprit of all the woes of Armenian-Americans: the loss of the ancestral language; the alienation of younger cohorts from Armenian churches, political parties, voluntary associations, and communal activities; the atrophy of the cultural heritage; the abandonment of family traditions; in sum, the cause of all the changes in the life-style that the immigrant generation had taken for granted.

Interestingly, Armenian-Americans do not realize, as the evidence from the New York survey has shown that statistically intermarriage is of secondary significance to the passing of generations in the United States and religious affiliation. Children of mixed ancestry do not as a rule exhibit all those supposedly "undesirable" characteristics I have listed above. A non-Armenian parent decreases the likelihood of

participation in the ethnic world; however, the organized community's reactions are as significant, if not more so. Their attitudes and behavior send the message that *odars* are not welcome in their midst.

The aim of this study was to analyze the pervasive question of assimilation that has perplexed Armenians ever since they settled in the United States of America over a century ago. While some lamented the ossification of the immigrant culture, skeptics surmised that the primordial forces of Armenianness would prevail; after all, they had managed to survive as a people for thousands of years. They survived numerous invading armies, centuries of foreign domination, several natural and man-made calamities, and as if all that was not enough, their long and turbulent history culminated in the first Genocide of the twentieth century. In spite of the obsession with the "white massacre," there was scant empirical proof of what was happening to Armenianness in America. Yet, there was no limit to myths and speculative theories. Therefore, the motivating factor behind this investigation on Armenian-Americans was to put to rest the contentious subject of assimilation.

The empirical evidence in this book came predominantly from a lengthy mail questionnaire survey that yielded 584 responses. The sample was randomly selected from the mailing lists of Armenian churches and organizations in metropolitan New York and New Jersey and supplemented with a snowball sample of respondents who were organizationally not affiliated. The results are believed to be generalizable to all men and women of Armenian descent in the United States of America. Moreover, the findings are applicable to other white ethnic groups of the "new" immigration (i.e., those who came to the New World at the turn of the twentieth century), and somewhat less to racial groups such as blacks, Hispanics, and Asian-Americans because of higher levels of discrimination and prejudice against them. In other words, the assimilative profile of Armenians presented here is by no means unique; the impact of social, economic, and political conditions in the host society are considerable. Yet, as I said in chapter 1, no two ethnic groups are exactly alike because of the specific circumstances of their arrival, the various waves of immigration, their timing, size, and dispersion; and, of course, the cultural baggage brought with them.

The assimilation that the earliest Armenian immigrants in Fresno as

elsewhere had feared is indeed well under way. However, what the pioneers had not foreseen was the changing nature of Armenianness. Indeed, they would have been pleasantly surprised to learn that their grandchildren and great-grandchildren continue to hold onto their Armenian identity and are immensely proud of their heritage. The change is from traditional Armenianness, which is typical of the foreign-born generation, to symbolic Armenianness, which is characteristic of American-born generations, though the distinctions are not absolute. It is the thesis of this book that processes of assimilation and changes in the nature of Armenianness go hand in hand.

The differences in the two forms of Armenianness are best portrayed through the debate over language. The traditional Armenians who understand their ethnicity as an ascribed, behavioral, corporate entity insist that one cannot be an Armenian without speaking Armenian and being immersed in an Armenian subculture. They realize that parents in the United States are incapable of single-handedly imparting to their children a solid grounding in the basics of reading and writing Armenian, as well as knowledge of the history and culture of their ancestors. Thus, traditional Armenians are fervent advocates of all-day Armenian schools.

The symbolic Armenians, on the other hand, conceive of their ethnic identity as a choice, expressed in terms of pride in one's heritage and strong feelings toward people and things Armenian. They gauge an individual's commitment to his/her Armenian background in terms of voluntary actions. Contributions of one's time, energy, and money to Armenian concerns are valued. No less important are the personal accomplishments of men and women of Armenian descent in their fields of endeavor. Through their successes, those who achieve fame and fortune testify that Armenians come from a fine stock of talented, hardworking people—a group worthy of recognition by the rest of the world.

All this implies that manifestations of symbolic Armenianness are confined to the sidestream, to one's leisure time and private life. By no means should one's ethnic background interfere with one's economic, social, and political integration in the larger society. Therefore, symbolic Armenian-Americans perceive all-day schools as too parochial or too ethnic, essentially because such learning environments do not reflect the pluralism of American society. On the

other hand, less demanding forms of secondary socialization into the Armenian world, such as Sunday schools, college courses, or travel abroad summer programs, are favored because they are more congruent with their definition of Armenianness. Ideally, one should compete effectively in the larger economic and political arena while recognizing one's roots and being proud of one's ancestral patrimony.

Assimilation is not a unitary process. I have used in this study Milton Gordon's theoretical perspective, which postulates seven analytically separate subprocesses of assimilation, each progressing at its own pace. So far I have analyzed all the dependent variables except marital assimilation. Intermarriage is not an isolated phenomenon; it is an integral part of the changes that take place in the nature of Armenianness. An understanding of the dynamics of mate selection is warranted here.

## Armenian Intermarriage in the United States

### *Variables Affecting Rates of Intermarriage*

It has been argued that marital assimilation is the "inevitable by-product of structural assimilation" (Gordon 1964, 80). Interethnic and interreligious marriages have been explained as the natural outcome of assimilation and the closing of social and cultural distance between immigrant groups in the United States. Other factors influencing such marriages are sex ratio, size of a group, propinquity, availability, incidence of chance meetings, and homogamy. Generally, interethnic and interreligious marriages increase between immigrant groups and with the host society when there is a decrease in residential segregation, when variation in socioeconomic status decreases; and when there are changes in attitudes.

More specifically, it has been argued by Peres and Schrift (1978, 429) that the rate of interethnic and interreligious marriages depends upon "(1) variation in the reservoirs (i.e., the number of individuals in the relevant population who satisfy certain requirements); or (2) changes in the prerequisites for becoming eligible (i.e., in the attitudes or preferences of individuals who are active in the marriage market)." When immigrant ethnic and religious groups (or minority groups in Peres and Schrift's designation) have comparable distribution of

socioeconomic resources, the field of eligibles increases. However, the lowest stratum of the host society is generally very ethnocentric and fearful of losing its relative advantage. Therefore, it is unlikely to intermingle with outsiders or newcomers, let alone marry into such groups. Members of the minority consequently need to bypass this barrier group and achieve educational and occupational parity with a higher, more tolerant stratum of the society (Peres and Schrift 1978, 429-30). In other words, a prerequisite for marital assimilation for immigrant groups is a big leap up the socioeconomic ladder.

Mate selection systems, past and present, have been based on the rule of homogamy; that is, like marries like. People choose spouses who have traits similar to their own; such as manners, tastes, traditions, life-styles, language, subcultures, race, religion, caste, ethnicity, and social class. Rules of exogamy proscribe marital unions between members of the same group, while rules of endogamy prescribe the groups one must marry into. For the early immigrant groups in America, communal segregation and cultural differences restricted marriages into out-groups; however, ethnic and religious exogamy proscriptions have since been replaced by milder ethnocentric preference rules.

Transformations in marriage preference patterns have been brought about by changes in the family system and in the immigrant cultures. First, in mate selection, the family system has put the decision-making process increasingly on the individuals entering the union. The "romantic love complex" has replaced the matchmaker. Romantic love is a bait that lures mates into matrimony; it transfers loyalties from one's family of origin into one's family of procreation and provides an emotional cushion during the transitional process into new role relationships. In industrial societies such as the United States, love has been institutionalized as a prerequisite for marriage. Second, acculturation processes have shed the conspicuous characteristics that distinguished immigrant subcultures, such as language, dress, and mannerisms, making ethnic groups more homogamous. Other factors contributing to increases in marital assimilation in the United States include

> the philosophical concept of freedom, a relatively open arms immigration policy since the nation's birth, unplanned migration which limited the number of potential in-group marriage partners available to any cohort in the marriage market and a

> system of stratification which rewards merit rather than family background and places more importance on class status than ethnic, cultural, or racial background. The rates of intercultural and interracial marriage have been especially advancing with the ever changing communication and transportation technology closing space and providing time to test and experiment with one's interpersonal relationships. (Jeter 1982, 110-11)

Scholars have debated whether the opportunity structures that enhance interethnic and interreligious encounters are more powerful than value systems that encourage ethnocentrism in mate selection. This argument is illustrated by Wesley Fisher's (1980) analysis of the Soviet marriage market. Fisher found that sociodemographic factors, and not ideology or nationalistic feelings, were responsible for the low intermarriage rates in Soviet Armenia. Others have disagreed with these conclusions contending that religion, an indicator of national consciousness, is the single best predictor of ethnic endogamy in the Soviet Union (Silver 1978).

Peter Blau's work on heterogeneity and inequality has provided significant support to the structural hypothesis of intermarriage. He and his associates have postulated that "cultural values discouraging intermarriage are not sufficient to nullify structural influences encouraging it" (Blau, Blum, and Schwartz 1982, 48; see also Blau and Schwartz 1984). Heterogeneous environments increase chance encounters between people who come from diverse backgrounds. Without these fortuitous meetings congenial or intimate relationships would not be possible. Blau, Blum, and Schwartz have demonstrated that measures of ethnic heterogeneity (among other types of heterogeneity) in the American metropolis[1] were highly correlated with intermarriage rates (Weighted Least Squares for national origin was .94, for mother tongue .86, and for ethnic background .75). They conclude that "the structural constraints of heterogeneity foster intergroup relations initially in the face of ingroup values engendering opposite tendencies, and in the long run by weakening the ingroup values themselves" (Blau, Blum, and Schwartz 1982, 54).

Any subcommunity that has a distinctive identity, such as a linguistic environment,[2] encourages ethnic endogamy. Stevens and Swicegood (1987) have found that second- or later-generation ethnics who retain their mother tongue (i.e., have not switched to English at home) are more likely to marry within their ethnic group. The larger the size, the more the geographical segregation, the greater the ethnic

language retention of U.S.-born subgroups, then the higher their rates of endogamy. However, Stevens and Swicegood add "the erosion of non-English languages over time has been accompanied by declining levels of ethnic endogamy. This implication is congruent with recent research, which also argues that levels of endogamy have been declining because of the growing number of persons for whom ethnicity is either a vague or a bilateral notion and thus a less important factor in marital preferences and choices" (1987, 81). It should be noted that ethnocentric preference rules in mate selection are not altogether salutary. Indeed, ethnic endogamy may be desirable to perpetuate cultural distinctions and retard the assimilation of immigrant groups, but it also sustains social inequality (Crispino 1980, 103).

In another study, Stevens and Schoen (1988) support the assimilationist perspective (rather than cultural pluralism) and confirm that there is an inverse relationship between linguistic homogamy and educational attainment; the higher the educational level, the less the linguistic homogamy. This is attributed not to the greater facility of using English but "to the higher degree of social interaction with majority group members that takes place within higher educational institutions and to the role education plays in promoting the importance of achieved versus ascribed criteria in American society" (Stevens and Schoen 1988, 277). Moreover, the study also found that there is an exchange relationship in the marriage choices of men and women. Women with English-language backgrounds and lower educational levels tend to marry men with higher educational attainment but non-English backgrounds. This is similar to the pattern of hypergamy described long ago by Davis (1941) and Merton (1941) for interracial marriages. They argued that upper-class black men exchange their advantageous socioeconomic position for the white lower-class female's higher caste position.

Ruby Jo Reeves Kennedy's (1944; 1952) examination of marriage records in New Haven (CT) from 1870 to 1950 demonstrated the national trend toward the "triple melting pot" of Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish assimilation. Kennedy found that there were few interreligious marriages but significant interethnic marriages. In later generations, the Irish, Italian, and Polish Catholics were intermarrying; so were British-Americans, Germans, and Scandinavian Protestants;

and the Jews married each other.[3] The empirical generalization of ethnic exogamy but religious (denominational) endogamy is applicable to most immigrant groups in the United States. For example, it has been observed that among Arabic-speaking groups, Syrian Jews tend to marry American Jews, Syrian Christians tend to marry other Christians, and Syrian Muslims tend to marry other Muslims (Zenner 1982, 474).

Given the above theoretical contributions, one can predict that the higher the generational status, the higher the rate of Armenian exogamy will be for the following reasons: First, the largest concentration of eligible mates for the endogamous marriage market are the institutionally affiliated Armenian-Americans. Yet as shown in chapter 3, for the overwhelming majority of third- and fourth-generation Armenian-Americans, the formally structured community is unable to attract or retain their interest. Second, even in large metropolitan areas like New York, Los Angeles, Boston, and San Francisco where the concentration of the Armenian-American population forms a "critical mass," their absolute numbers are too small to insure fortuitous encounters between people of Armenian descent. It goes without saying that in the rest of the country, men and women of Armenian descent have even lower probability of meeting fellow Armenians in the course of their daily lives. It is true that casual meetings do not necessarily end in marriage, but in the currently acceptable mate selection system, they are a prerequisite for the development of intimate ties that may develop into marital unions.

Third, the middle- to upper-middle-class status of most Armenian-Americans, their prestigious occupational standing, their college or higher educational attainment, and their predominantly above average incomes make them highly acceptable and desirable mates by other groups. Fourth, for those in later generations, the ethnic background of one's spouse is of secondary significance to interpersonal attributes and compatibility. On the one hand, they are less likely to have retained a distinctive Armenian culture; as seen in chapter 4, they are highly unlikely to speak, read, or write Armenian. On the other hand, they are more likely to have imbued the American ideals of merit and personal achievement over ascribed status; that is, they tend to judge a potential mate on his/her social and psychological qualities rather than an ethnic or religious background. Moreover, they are more likely to

have intermingled extensively, privately and publicly, with people from a variety of ethnic, racial, and religious backgrounds.

In sum, culturally and structurally, Armenianness ceases to be a less pressing factor in the marriage market for those in later generations. Borrowing the words of Tinker in describing the high rates of Japanese-American intermarriage and assimilation, I conclude that likewise, Armenian-Americans "are not trying to deny their past, their intermarriage is just the natural expression of their dispersion into the larger society" (1982, 72). Indeed as several of the New York respondents remarked, intermarriage does not necessarily indicate a rejection of their Armenian identity.

*Armenian Exogamy*

Sixty-four percent of the married sample[4] have spouses with Armenian mothers and Armenian fathers, and only 2 percent (N = 10) have spouses with one Armenian parent, the rest (34 percent) were non-Armenian. Respondents in the New York study were married into the numerically largest ethnic and religious groups that live in metropolitan New York and New Jersey. They are the same groups that the respondents chose their best friends and acquaintances from (see chap. 3). Spouses of Italian descent make up 3.7 percent of the married sample, the "Americans" approximate 3.4 percent of spouses, the Irish 3.1 percent, the Jews 3.1 percent, the Germans 3 percent, the Polish 1.5 percent, and the English 1 percent. In addition, there were national/ethnic backgrounds that reflected the country of birth of the immigrant generation, for example Arab Christians, Assyrians, Greeks, and Bulgarians. These collectively represented about 3 percent of spouses. It should be noted that Armenians are less likely to marry blacks, Hispanics and Asian-Americans, especially in the early generations. Armenians are no less racist than the rest of white America. Members of such minorities are not considered desirable marriage partners. Unions with minorities would be tantamount to marrying down; status considerations remain a priority even as ethnicity and religion become less so.

If the rate of intermarriage is defined as the proportion of mixed couples in the population of all married couples (Peres and Schrift 1978; see Cretser and Leon 1982, 8-9 for other computations) then the

rate of out-marriage of the New York sample is 34.5 percent. As far as this sample is representative of the Armenian-American population,[5] this rate then reflects the percentage of the ethnically intermarried in that population, irrespective of generation. The reader is reminded that this rate of intermarriage mirrors the past, it does not predict the future. A significant proportion of the early immigrant generation is still alive, and new waves of immigration have revitalized the pool in recent decades.

The ethnic background of respondent's spouse is highly significant with generational standing; the longer the generational presence in the United States, the higher the probability of Armenian exogamy (see table 6.1). About 85 percent of the foreign-born were married to Armenian spouses (one or two parents of Armenian descent). There is a drop of about 25 percentage points by each generation. Thus, the second generation were 59 percent endogamous, and later generations about 30 percent or less. It should be noted that fourth-generation respondents tended to be younger in age (75 percent below age thirty-nine) and over half (56 percent) of them were not married at the time of the survey. Later-generation respondents were also more likely to be the children of mixed marriages, as they were more likely to have at least a college degree. All these factors increase their probability of marrying non-Armenians.

There were no intermarriages between later-generation Armenian-Americans and foreign-born Armenians and only about 15 percent of

**TABLE 6.1**
**Frequency Distribution of Spouse's Ethnicity by Respondent's Generation (married sample only)**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 493 | (196) | (233) | (30) | (27) | (7) |
| Armenian parents | 84.7 | 58.8 | 33.3 | 37.0 | 0.0 |
| Parents non-Armenian | 15.3 | 41.2 | 66.6 | 62.9 | 100.0 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

the second generation had foreign-born Armenian spouses. This adds further evidence to my earlier claim that later-generation descendants are alienated from the Armenian community and have few contacts among the immigrants.[6] It is surmised that foreign-born Armenians are not likely to be homogeneous mates to those in later generations; at the very least their worldview and understanding of Armenianness tend to be different even if their socioeconomic characteristics are compatible.

It is interesting to note that U.S.-born generations are almost twice as likely to remain single after age forty as the immigrant generation. The data presented here is corroborated by a study of French-Armenians that found a high rate of celibacy among older cohorts. The author attributes this to the contradictions of their "marginal" existence between the French and Armenian worlds.[7] In the New York survey, those over forty years of age who had never married comprised 6.5 percent of the immigrant generation, 10.9 percent of the second generation, 11.9 percent of the third and fourth generations (7.7 percent in total sample). In recent years, several dating organizations have advertised their services in the Armenian press. For example, the "Armenian Connection, Inc." provides a toll-free telephone number, operative twenty-four hours a day, and invites members with the following message: "Join this exciting club and meet professional and social friends throughout the United States. We will search for an Armenian friend for you if you are in graduate school or already have a graduate degree and are between 21 and 51" *(Armenian International Magazine*, January 1991, p. 42). The *Armenian American Almanac* (1991) lists an additional four dating services.[8] No information is at hand on these organizations. Studies of dating agencies generally conclude that they supply numerous dates, but hardly any marriages. I suspect the same for these Armenian agencies.

The rate of Armenian exogamy is likely to be compounded over time because in addition to generational status, mixed ancestry of respondents more than doubles their chances of marrying non-Armenians (see table 6.2). Given the one-time, cross-sectional nature of the New York data, one needs to find methods of comparing rates of intermarriage over time (within the sample). One way of looking at change in interethnic marriages is to compare the respondents' ancestry with those of their spouses'. Mixed ancestry in the sample is

11.3 percent non-Armenian while respondents' spouses' ancestry is 36 percent non-Armenian. Another method is to compare the ancestry of younger respondents with older cohorts. There is a negative monotonic relationship in mixed marriages by each age category in the sample; the younger the age cohort, the higher the mixed ancestry. Respondents in their seventies had 5 percent intermarried parents, those in their sixties had 6.6 percent, those in their fifties 9.8 percent, forty year olds had 11.1 percent, thirty year olds had 20.6 percent, and those in their twenties had 37.5 percent. Age and spouse's ethnicity are also inversely related; the younger the respondent, the higher the probability of interethnic marriage, irrespective of generation.

No statistical data on the marital choices of respondents' children's generation is available. Nonetheless, respondents' comments indicate that a significant number of their children marry outside the Armenian-American community. All of the following remarks were made by middle-aged, second-generation mothers and fathers.

> My son and daughter went away to college and married non-Armenians.

> My three children have married non-Armenians, but I'm happy to say they are happily married.

> I have three children who grew up in a non-Armenian community (not by choice). All three are married to non-Armenians who are from fine upper class families. I am disappointed that at least one did not marry an Armenian. (We came close).

> All five children are married—very happily to non-Armenians.

**TABLE 6.2**
**Frequency Distribution of Spouse's Ethnicity by Respondent's Ancestry (married sample only)**

| Respondent's | Both Parents Armenian | One Parent Armenian |
|---|---|---|
| N = (493) | (447) | (46) |
| Spouse's | | |
| 1 Armenian parent | 1.6 | 6.5 |
| 2 Armenian parents | 67.6 | 23.9 |
| Parents non-Armenian | 30.9 | 69.6 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Although my sons are married to non-Armenians, they have much regard, great respect and a very positive attitude toward the Armenian nation.

All our four children married non-Armenians.

These quotations among many others, humanize the statistical evidence on the increasing marital assimilation of Armenian-Americans.

Those who have "other" religious denominations or "no religion" in the sample are least likely to marry ethnic Armenians or members of Armenian Apostolic, Protestant, or Catholic churches (see tables 6.3 and 6.4). Apostolic marriages comprised 80 percent of all endogamous marriages (N = 304). Furthermore, those who married into Armenian

**TABLE 6.3**
**Frequency Distribution of Spouse's Ethnicity by Respondent's Religious Affiliation**
**(married sample only)**

| | Apostolic Armenian | Protestant Armenian | Catholic Armenian | Other (Non-Arm.) | No Religion |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 487 | (323) | (47) | (16) | (76) | (25) |
| 2 Parents Armenian | 76.2 | 78.7 | 56.3 | 17.1 | 16.0 |
| 1 Parent Armenian | 2.5 | 0.0 | 6.2 | 1.3 | 0.0 |
| Parents non-Arm. | 21.4 | 21.3 | 37.5 | 81.6 | 84.0 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

**TABLE 6.4**
**Frequency Distribution of Spouse's Religion by Respondent's Generation**
**(married sample only)**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 474 | (204) | (230) | (27) | (26) | (7) |
| Apostolic | 70.6 | 46.9 | 40.7 | 30.8 | 0.0 |
| Arm. Protestant | 11.9 | 6.1 | 0.0 | 3.8 | 0.0 |
| Arm. Catholic | 6.0 | 2.6 | 0.0 | 3.8 | 0.0 |
| Other | 11.4 | 44.4 | 59.3 | 61.5 | 100.0 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

denominations other than their own were most likely to marry Apostolics. And, later-generation Armenians who married fellow ethnics were also most likely to marry a member of the Apostolic church (table 6.4). In marital assimilation, as in cultural and structural assimilation, the Armenian Apostolic church has provided an extra buffer to Armenian ethnicity in fighting forces of assimilation. However, one cannot infer from this data whether it is the effect of sheer size[9] or that of the intrinsic attributes of the Armenian Apostolic church. Indeed, one finds here the classic sociological question: Are structural aspects more significant than cultural ones? Research findings quoted above tend to suggest the power of structural ties over ideology.

There were too many denominational affiliations and too small a sample size to be able to cross-tabulate the spouse's "other" religious affiliations with those of the respondent's. Nonetheless, the rough estimates available (see table 6.5) suggest that with the exception of the very small proportion of Armenian-Americans who marry Jews (3 percent of sample), the "triple melting pot" rule of religious endogamy holds for the Armenian case as well. Protestant Armenians were most likely to find mates from mainstream Protestant denominations; the Armenian Catholics were most likely to marry members of the Roman Catholic church; and Armenian Apostolics tended to marry Presbyterians and Episcopalians (see also chap. 2).

Greeley (1970) corroborates these findings with evidence from national samples that at least three-quarters of the American

**TABLE 6.5**
**Frequency Distribution of Spouse's Religious Affiliation by Respondent's Religious Affiliation (married sample only)**

| | Apostolic Armenian | Protestant Armenian | Catholic Armenian | Other (Non-Arm.) | No Religion |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 470 | (314) | (46) | (12) | (75) | (23) |
| Apostolic | 76.7 | 15.2 | 25.0 | 4.0 | 4.3 |
| Arm. Protestant | 2.2 | 63.0 | 0.0 | 1.3 | 0.0 |
| Arm. Catholic | 2.2 | 2.2 | 75.0 | 1.3 | 0.0 |
| Other | 16.9 | 19.6 | 0.0 | 92.0 | 56.5 |
| No religion | 1.9 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 1.3 | 39.1 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

population marry within their religious denomination. He speculates that

> the strain toward denominational homogeneity is rooted in the American belief that religious differences between husband and wife are not good either for the marriage relationship or for the children of the marriage. This belief is probably reinforced by the fact that it is simpler and more convenient that everyone in the family belong to the same denomination. (Greeley 1970, 951)

Spouses of Catholics are likely to convert to Catholicism, while Jews and Catholics tend to marry within their denomination. Protestants marry across denominational lines, but will shift affiliations to maintain religious homogeneity in the family. Further research is needed on denominational conversions within the three Armenian churches to find what percentage of non-Armenian spouses convert or become members of Armenian churches.

The data presented here attest that interreligious marriages are more likely to be caused by indifference to religion than by conversions. Cohen's remarks about the Jewish American population are also applicable to Armenian-Americans. He writes:

> In today's secularized society, Judaism may be more vulnerable to threats from forces promoting indifference to religion than to the allure of competing major religions. In other words, Christianity and Judaism in America paradoxically may be natural allies in a struggle against secularity which may hold greater peril for all major faiths than do the ostensibly competing religious systems for one another. (Cohen 1983, 124)

About 6 percent of the New York sample declared "no religion" and most of them were young and in later generations. It has been shown throughout this study that respondents professing "no religion" rate highest on assimilation variables. I predict their chances for marrying non-Armenians to be equally high (see table 6.5).

It is hypothesized that the higher the educational attainment of the respondent, the higher the frequency of ethnic exogamy (see table 6.6). Indeed, there is a straight-line increase in non-Armenian spouses with each level of education (.21*). The proportion of nonethnic spouses among the most educated in the sample is more than double those of the least educated. Occupation and income, on the other hand, were not significantly associated with ethnicity of spouse. These results are corroborated for other ethnic groups (e.g., Cohen 1977; Kobrin and Goldscheider 1978, 240). One can conjecture that higher

education is more significant with marital assimilation because opportunities to meet non-Armenian friends and potential spouses increase the longer one stays in institutions of higher learning. Additionally, college and graduate education are believed to exert a liberating influence on people's value system. Furthermore, the rule of class homogamy measured by education holds true for the New York sample. Between 65 and 80 percent of respondents married people who had completed approximately similar levels of education as themselves. On the other hand, status homogamy, measured by father's occupation and respondent's occupation, was not significant.

One way of measuring rates of intermarriage is through cross-sectional surveys such as my own study. Another method is to examine vital statistics. Two studies have attempted to do that for the Armenian-American population. One used church records and the other public records. Each source has its advantages and disadvantages. For example, vital statistics do not show generational status and other characteristics of the spouses, while surveys do not reflect trends over time, unless they are periodically administered. Yet the two complement each other. Unfortunately, all three data sets reported here are regional. Nationwide samples or vital statistics of Armenian-Americans have yet to be gathered.

Aharonian's (1983) study of marriages conducted in the churches of the Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church in New England found a monumental increase in intermarriage rates. The percentage of mixed marriages for the period between 1950 and 1954 was 21

**TABLE 6.6**
**Frequency Distribution of Spouse's Ethnicity by Respondent's Educational Attainment**
**(married sample only)**

| | Some High School | High School | Some College | College | More than College |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 476 | (44) | (126) | (98) | (102) | (106) |
| 2 parents Armenian | 77.3 | 76.2 | 59.2 | 54.9 | 52.8 |
| 1 parent Armenian | 2.3 | 1.6 | 5.1 | 1.0 | 0.9 |
| Parents non-Arm. | 20.4 | 22.2 | 35.7 | 44.1 | 46.2 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

percent, by 1975-76 the figure had gone up to 78 percent. It should be noted that these rates do not include marriages conducted in the churches of the Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church, in the Armenian Protestant and Catholic churches, in other (non-Armenian) churches and synagogues, and those registered with justices of the peace. Nonetheless, it is assumed that current figures from these other sources should be approximately the same, or higher than the ones reported. Indeed, Aharonian estimates that the annual percentage of Armenian exogamy at present is closer to the 90 to 95 percentage range when all marriages of people of Armenian descent are taken into consideration (Aharonian 1983, 37; see also Aharonian 1986-87).

The second study, by Jendian,[10] investigated the marriage records in Fresno County in 1930, 1960, and 1990. In addition, the author had access to similar statistics for 1940 and 1980. From a total of 324 marriages for the five selected years, the rate of out-marriage for men and women of Armenian descent in Fresno was calculated as 50.9 percent. The study found that rates of intermarriage increased for the children of the foreign-born, but stayed around 90 percent for the children of the U.S.-born. More specifically, among those with foreign-born parents, 10.4 percent of the thirty-four marriages enacted in 1930 were out-marriages; the proportion went up to 16.9 percent in 1940 (out of sixty-five marriages); to 44.9 percent in 1960 (out of forty-nine marriages); to 72.7 percent in 1980 (out of twenty-two marriages); to 42.3 percent in 1990 (out of twenty-six marriages). For the offspring of American-born parents, all (100 percent) marriages celebrated in 1960 were to non-Armenians (out of thirteen marriages); 94.4 percent in 1980 (out of thirty-six marriages) and 90.6 percent in 1990 (out of thirty-two marriages). Furthermore, Jendian found that 32.1 percent of marriages celebrated in an Apostolic church; 31.4 percent of those officiated in an Armenian Protestant church; 92.5 percent of weddings conducted in a non-Armenian religious institution, and 66.7 percent of civil ceremonies were out-marriages.

### *Ethnocentric Preference Rules*

There were two statements in the New York survey that measured the attitudes of the respondents toward Armenian endogamy. The first read: "A good Armenian should marry another Armenian." The

second was: "It is important for me that my children marry someone of my own ethnic background." The first statement received high frequency of disagreement; 47.5 percent of the sample disagreed (47.5 percent agreed). The value-loaded wording compounded the negative responses. On the other hand, 35 percent of the sample disagreed with the second statement (50 percent agreed).[11] There were numerous comments on intermarriage. One respondent said it "would be nice," another said, "depends on circumstances but would make life easier." A third respondent asked: "What is a 'Good' Armenian? Personal choice by God's guidance." A foreign-born woman wrote: "I would like that [children marry Armenians], but this is only a dream. How can we do this when our children are exposed to other ethnic groups?" Another foreign-born elderly man wrote: "Same religion would help to deter them from calling each other degrading names."

Both attitude statements on Armenian endogamy were highly significant by generational status[12] (tau c .34* for both; see tables 6.7 and 6.8). Those who did not approve of ethnic endogamy tended to have later generational status, non-Armenian denominations, or "no religion," and mixed ancestry. They were also more likely to be younger in age and single. It is noteworthy that the small proportion of divorced and separated respondents in the sample were more likely to disagree with the statements that Armenians should marry Armenians, and women disagreed somewhat more often than men. The gap observed throughout this study between attitudes and behavior is applicable here as well. People of Armenian descent are more likely to uphold ethnocentric attitudes than they are willing to live by them. In

**TABLE 6.7**
**Frequency Distribution of Attitude Statement: "A Good Armenian Should Marry Another Armenian" by Generation**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 581 | (218) | (270) | (36) | (41) | (16) |
| Agree | 67.9 | 33.0 | 13.9 | 12.2 | 0.0 |
| No opinion | 5.0 | 13.7 | 11.1 | 12.2 | 6.3 |
| Disagree | 27.1 | 53.3 | 75.0 | 75.6 | 93.8 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

any case, later-generation Armenian-Americans are least likely to endorse ethnic endogamy both in attitude and in behavior.

In today's American society, marriages are based on personal attraction, romantic love, and psychological compatibility. Armenians are no exception, they follow the same norms. Other than altruistic sentiments about the welfare of their children, parents do not have economic or political interests in their marriage partners. Consequently, the marriage market is not controlled by elders as in traditional agrarian societies. This also explains why divorce rates are high in postindustrial societies. Because of the increasing economic independence of women, among other reasons, when spouses are unhappy in a relationship there are few ulterior factors to keep them tied in matrimony.

Given the small size and geographical dispersion of Armenian-Americans, their relatively high socioeconomic status, the absence of prejudice and discrimination against them, the compatibility of the Armenian-American subculture with mainstream American societal requirements, it is almost inevitable that men and women of Armenian descent will meet, fall in love and marry outside their ethnic group. In other words, the rates of intermarriage are caused by two processes: one, the changes in the family system and social relations that are typical of a postindustrial economy; second, cultural changes in the traditional Armenianness of the immigrant generation.

High rates of Armenian exogamy are a fact of life for Armenian-Americans at the turn of the twenty-first century. While many community leaders denounce intermarriage for all their afflictions, I

**TABLE 6.8**
**Frequency Distribution of Attitude Statement: "It Is Important That My Children Marry Someone of My Own Ethnic Background" by Generation**

| | Foreign-Born | U.S.-Born of F.B. Parents | 1 Parent U.S.-Born | 2 Parents U.S.-Born | Grandparent U.S.-Born |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N = 577 | (215) | (269) | (36) | (41) | (16) |
| Agree | 74.9 | 38.7 | 36.1 | 17.1 | 18.8 |
| No opinion | 7.9 | 18.6 | 19.4 | 22.0 | 18.8 |
| Disagree | 17.2 | 42.8 | 44.4 | 61.0 | 62.5 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

argue that the issue lies in the inability of institutional structures to accommodate the transformations in individual forms of Armenianness, from traditional to symbolic. The Armenian-American community continues to maintain narrow boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. Marrying a non-Armenian does not mean a negation of one's ancestral heritage. I have reported in chapter 3 that individuals who marry non-Armenians and still want to maintain active involvement within the communal structures are shunned because of their *odar* spouses. If the churches and voluntary associations were more receptive and welcoming of non-Armenian spouses and the children of mixed marriages, more of them would be willing to enjoy the benefits of ethnic affiliation.

## Summary of Results from New York Survey

Tables 6.9 to 6.12 summarize the statistical data from the New York survey. Table 6.9 shows, in rank order, the assimilative variables that change the most from the first to the second generation, and table 6.10 shows indicators with themost changes from foreign-born respondents to fourth-generation respondents. In table 6.10 "later-generation" is calculated as an average of third- and fourth-generation respondents (N = 93). Estimates for later generations are higher than would be expected for the fourth and subsequent generations. Also, some of the indicators of assimilation summarized in table 6.10 are artificially inflated by averaging lower levels of ethnic maintenance than those used in the body of the text. For example, 71 percent of later-generation respondents attend an Armenian event or activity at least once a year. This does not mean they are frequent attenders; on the contrary, one activity a year is a very low participation rate.

### *Cultural Changes*

Language suffers the most by the passing of generations. Ability to perpetuate the written word decreases by about 60 percentage points from immigrant parents to their U.S.-born children's generation (table 6.9). The oral traditions fare slightly better because they do not need specialists to perpetuate them. Children learn to speak Armenian at home, by rote. Nonetheless, it is no longer an unconscious process, a

"mother tongue." By the second generation, Armenian ceases to be the language spoken most frequently in the home, dropping by 50 percentage points (table 6.9). In later generations, less than one in ten men and women who identify themselves as Armenian-American can speak, read, or write Armenian (table 6.11).

Attitudes about the place of language in the definition of Armenianness change by the second generation (table 6.9). In order to avoid cognitive dissonance, U.S.-born generations no longer include knowledge of the language as a necessary precondition for their Armenian identity. This becomes one of the salient points of conflict between the American-born and the foreign-born, especially those from the Middle East. An often heard criticism addressed to the former by the latter is: "What kind of an Armenian are you, if you don't speak Armenian?" It is therefore not surprising that institutions that require knowledge of the Armenian language are supported

**TABLE 6.9**
**Greatest Percentage Decrease on Indicators of Assimilation from Foreign-Born Generation to Second Generation**

| | Measures of Assimilation | % Decrease |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Read Armenian | - 59.0 |
| 2. | Frequency Armenian spoken at home | - 50.0 |
| 3. | Proportion of Armenian friends when young and now | - 35.7 |
| 4. | Attitudes favoring ethnic endogamy | - 35.0 |
| 5. | Willingness to travel far to an Armenian church | - 33.3 |
| 6. | Spouse non-Armenian | - 33.0 |
| 7. | Read Armenian literature (in original or translation) | - 29.4 |
| 8. | Willingness to employ Armenians in business | - 26.2 |
| 9. | Attend requiem services for April 24 | - 24.0 |
| 10. | Indifference to Armenian political parties | - 23.2 |
| 11. | Speak Armenian adequately to very well | - 23.1 |
| 12. | Willingness to patronize Armenian-owned businesses | - 21.5 |
| 13. | Believe a good Armenian must speak Armenian | - 21.0 |
| 14. | Attend public gatherings for April 24 | - 21.0 |
| 15. | Eat Armenian food once a week or more | - 19.6 |
| 16. | Receive several Armenian publications | - 19.5 |
| 17. | Believe one's duty is to support the Armenian church | - 19.5 |
| 18. | Attend Armenian church several times a year | - 19.2 |

predominantly by the Armenian-speaking immigrant generation and somewhat less by their children's generation. These include the Armenian churches, all-day schools, traditional political parties, Armenian language newspapers and radio, contemporary Armenian singers, Armenian theater, and literature written in Armenian. Without the arrival of new immigrants, the use of the Armenian language would become vestigial in the population.

Other aspects of Armenian culture become less and less a part of the everyday life of Armenian-Americans (table 5.12 in chap. 5). Fewer people read Armenian literature in the original or in translation, including works written in English by fellow Armenian-Americans such as William Saroyan and Michael Arlen. Fewer households receive Armenian newspapers, magazines, or other publications (in English). Surely, even fewer people actually read them. Armenian food is enjoyed and remains popular with almost everybody, but it is no longer eaten frequently at home. Instead of being eaten as a routine occurrence, it is relegated to "special" ceremonial occasions to be cooked by older women of the family or bought from speciality stores ready-made.

**TABLE 6.10**
**Greatest Percentage Decrease on Indicators of Assimilation from Foreign-Born Generation to Fourth Generation**

| | Measures of Assimilation | % Decrease |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Spouse non-Armenian | - 88.6 |
| 2. | Speak Armenian | - 84.5 |
| 3. | Proportion of Armenian friends when young | - 76.8 |
| 4. | Proportion of Armenian friends now | - 71.7 |
| 5. | Read Armenian | - 65.5 |
| 6. | Frequency Armenian spoken at home | - 62.5 |
| 7. | Visit Armenians almost always | - 62.3 |
| 8. | Willingness to travel far to an Armenian church | - 57.8 |
| 9. | Eat Armenian food once a week or more | - 56.9 |
| 10. | Wish children would marry Armenians | - 56.8 |
| 11. | Indifference to Armenian political parties | - 55.5 |
| 12. | Attend Armenian church several times a year | - 53.2 |
| 13. | Willingness to vote for a political candidate of Armenian descent | - 52.2 |

Lack of exposure to the Armenian press and radio and other opinion-shaping institutions makes later-generation descendants accept the mainstream media's interpretations of national and international news concerning Armenians, rather than insider versions. There is empirical evidence that the national press gets its cues from the State Department or other official sources and interprets events in terms of the administration's policy on such matters. The notorious example is the Reagan administration's attribution of the label "alleged" to the Genocide. Another illustration concerns the labeling of Baltic peoples' struggles for independence from the Soviet Union as "nationalist aspirations" while belittling the same types of movements in Soviet Armenia as "ethnic unrest." On a different matter, New York respondents alienated from communal life tended to find that Armenian "terrorism" in the 1970s had soiled the good name and reputation of Armenian-Americans as law-abiding citizens. By contrast, foreign-born respondents were more likely to perceive the "terrorists" as freedom fighters. In general, later generations are less likely to be influenced by ideologies that reinforce the ethnic boundaries of "us" versus "them."

The greater acceptance of denominational differentiation and plurality and the greater legitimacy of religious freedom in the United States has had a tendency to turn ethnic communities into church communities. Because of its larger size, its unique religious tradition, and its fusion with the national interests of the Armenian people, the Armenian Apostolic church has to some degree been able to maintain firmer boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. Overall, adherents of the Armenian Apostolic church maintain higher levels of traditional ethnic behavior and attitudes than members of the Armenian Protestant church and the Armenian Catholic church. The attrition rate of the Armenian Protestant church is calculated to be at least double that of the Apostolics (19 percent for Apostolics versus about 40 percent for Protestants).

Yet with increasing generational presence there is a tendency to separate the ethnic and religious components of one's heritage. Acknowledging Armenian descent does not make one a member of an Armenian church. About 23 percent of the sample were in that category; 16 percent belonged to a number of mainstream Protestant denominations or the Roman Catholic church, and the rest declared

"no religion." Religious conversions to non-Armenian denominations are less of a threat to the future of Armenian churches than those who profess "no religion." For example, mixed parentage reduced Armenian church attendance, but it did not increase attendance in an alternate church. The trend toward secularization in the larger society affects Armenians as well. While foreign-born agnostics and atheists may be willing to use the Apostolic church as an arena for social encounters and support it financially as a focal center for their national interests, the American-born are not.

**TABLE 6.11**
**Percentage Change in Ethnic Behavior between Generations, Frequency of Behavior in Later Generations, and Tau Measures of Association**

| Measures of Assimilation | % Change from F.B. to Later Generations | Frequency in Later Generations (in percent) | Tau C |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1. Cultural Assimilation** | | | |
| Armenian food eaten once a week or more | - 43.4 | 32.3 | .26* |
| Speak Armenian | - 74.4 | 22.6 | .52* |
| Write Armenian | - 68.4 | 9.7 | .49* |
| Read Armenian literature (original or translation) | - 32.3 | 31.5 | .27* |
| Receive Armenian newspapers | - 30.1 | 30.3 | .19* |
| Attend Armenian church several times a year or more | - 39.0 | 33.3 | .22* |
| Sympathize with Armenian political parties or ideologies (including neutrals) | - 50.9 | 17.2 | .19* |
| **2. Structural Assimilation** | | | |
| Membership in Armenian voluntary associations | - 37.1 | 9.7 | Sig ¥ |
| Leadership in Armenian voluntary associations | - 10.3 | 8.6 | Not sig |
| Attend meetings of Armenian voluntary associations some of the time or more | - 25.2 | 18.3 | .18* |
| Attend at least one Armenian event hosted by voluntary associations per year | - 19.0 | 71.0 | Sig ¥ |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| At least one professional he or she deals with is of Armenian descent | - 25.0 | 36.6 | .16* |
| Feels very close to family | + 1.8 | 49.4 | Not Sig |
| Family needs are more important than individual's | - 12.0 | 72.0 | Not Sig |
| Willing to support parents with care of younger siblings | - 17.4 | 75.3 | .08* |
| Visit with other Armenians frequently | - 45.6 | 35.5 | .24* |
| At least one of three best friends is Armenian | - 37.3 | 34.4 | .24* |
| More than half of friends (other than best friends) are Armenian | - 59.7 | 18.3 | .36* |
| More than half of friends when 18 years of age were Armenian | - 55.1 | 28.0 | .35* |
| **3. Marital Assimilation** | | | |
| Spouse's parent(s) Armenian | - 53.4 | 31.3 | Sig ¥ |
| **4. Identificational Assimilation** | | | |
| Identify as American-Armenian or Armenian | - 17.3 | | 80.4 |
| Feelings of pride | - 10.2 | 87.5 | Not sig |
| **5. Absence of Prejudice and Discrimination** | | | |
| Perceived prejudice | - 6.2 | 2.1 | Not sig |
| **6. Civic Assimilation** | | | |
| Voted in presidential election | + 19.4 | 88.2 | Not sig |
| Active in local and national politics | + 9.7 | 19.3 | Not sig |
| Wrote letters to Congress regarding Genocide issue | - 19.5 | 25.0 | Not sig |
| Feel strongly about denial of Genocide | - 13.1 | 85.0 | Not sig |

* significant at.00001 level

¥ tau c not available because of multiple response category

Though there is little verbal renunciation of the sacred culture and traditions among respondents, it becomes less central in their lives. Hardly anyone practices the ancient tradition of fasting during the forty days of Lent; few people abstain from food and drink before taking communion; and church attendance is reduced to once or twice a year, mostly high holidays such as Christmas and Easter. In later generations, few believe that it is their duty to support an Armenian church, morally or financially, and fewer are willing to travel far or be inconvenienced in other ways to attend services.

Furthermore, it is unlikely that the majority of Armenian-Americans who do not speak Armenian will be willing to attend Divine Liturgy every Sunday and sit still for three hours when they do not understand the language or the significance of the rituals enacted in front of them. Attending a wedding, a christening, or a funeral, or a memorial service for the Genocide to please one's parents, spouse, or in-laws is a different matter. As I have explained, contemporary American society is a "time-famine" culture, and Armenian-Americans like the rest of their fellow citizens, are highly unlikely to sacrifice this precious asset to something they do not find meaningful or spiritually fulfilling.

About two-thirds of the immigrant generation sympathize with one of the three traditional Armenian political parties (Hunchag, Tashnag, and Ramgavar) or hold a neutral position *(chezok)*. Slightly less than half of the second generation do so. In later-generations, the frequency

**TABLE 6.12**
**Highest Frequencies (or least change) on Indictors of Assimilation in Fourth Generation**

| Measures of Assimilation | Frequency (in percent) |
|---|---|
| 1. Pride in heritage | 87.5 |
| 2. Has strong feelings toward Turkey's denial of the Genocide | 85.0 |
| 3. Armenian identity | 75.0 |
| 4. Disagree to change Armenian family name | 75.0 |
| 5. Attitude favoring dual identity: American and Armenian | 68.8 |
| 6. Willingness to help parents with support of younger siblings | 68.8 |
| 7. Considers family needs more important than one's own | 56.3 |
| 8. All five persons one feels closest to are kin | 56.3 |

drops to less than a fifth (8.6 percent for parties only; see table 6.11). Moreover, according to the comments of the respondents, many in the third and fourth generations did not know the differences in the political ideologies, and none of them officially joined these parties. One can confidently generalize that traditional Armenian politics becomes obsolete for the majority of American-born Armenians past the second generation because the parties are unable to represent their interests and concerns, let alone make a difference in their material circumstances.

The results of the New York survey suggest that traditional institutions have not caught up with changes in the personal forms of ethnicity. In other words, the churches, political parties, and other collective structures tend to advocate a traditional form of Armenianness. They assume that Armenian identity is an ascribed status: by virtue of having Armenian blood, a man or woman of Armenian descent is somehow obligated to become a member of the community. They do not realize that at the individual level, the vast majority of Armenian-Americans perceive their identity as a choice, and participation in collective life as voluntary action. The traditional institutions have not recognized that Armenianness in the United States is a commodity. Members will not flock to their doors unless they attract them by promising to fulfill some of their real or socially induced needs. Even then, members will not retain their membership if they are in any way dissatisfied. In order to survive, like any other commodity, Armenianness must remain competitive and serve specific functions.

### *Structural Changes*

Churches, voluntary associations, political parties, and other communal organizations define the collective consciousness of Armenian-Americans and provide the structural parameters for the collective expression of Armenianness. The Armenian-American community is a first- and second-generation phenomenon. At the core of the community is a proportionally small group of first- and second-generation Armenian-Americans who are fully immersed in its formal (i.e., voluntary associations) and informal (i.e., networks of relatives, friends, and acquaintances) structures. Those who are least likely to take part in collective manifestations of Armenianness are in sharp

contrast to the core group. They are most likely to have the following attributes: later generation, non-Armenian affiliation or "no religion," mixed ancestry, indifference to Armenian ideologies, higher education, and younger cohort. Yet, nonparticipation in communal life does not diminish their levels of Armenian identity. In between these two extremes are individuals of Armenian descent with varying degrees of communal participation; their personal attributes are somewhere in between as well.

Membership in Armenian voluntary organizations drops to less than 10 percent in later generations (table 6.11). Joiners are most likely to be attracted to folk dance groups and scholarly and cultural associations. Such organizations have specific goals and tend to be congruent with symbolic ethnicity. Old World organizations such as compatriotic societies and political parties cease to be meaningful to the American-born. Interestingly, the proportional decrease in those who attend meetings frequently and those who hold positions of responsibility in voluntary associations is much smaller (table 6.11). A very small ratio of later-generation Armenian-Americans who consciously choose to maintain active participation in communal life tend to be highly dedicated to their cause. Consequently, they assume positions of responsibility and leadership. The pool from which leaders are chosen does become smaller with the passage of generations (decreases 10 percentage points from the first generation), but the real loss is in the size of the audience to communal events (about 37 percentage point decrease from first generation).

Structural assimilation escalates in the third generation and beyond, both in formal and informal relations. First, there is a sharp drop after the second generation in participation in activities and events sponsored by Armenian voluntary associations (later generations make up only 10 percent of all participants in community events). Averaging the proportion of later-generation respondents who attended such events by the number of times these events are held annually demonstrates that ethnic festivals are the most popular; trailing far behind are sports matches, art exhibits, and folk dance shows. All these activities do not require knowledge of the Armenian language or culture. Later-generation Armenian-Americans are least likely to attend dinner dances. Paradoxically, the dinner dance is the single most hosted event in the Armenian social calendar (at least 74 out of a

total of 207 "events"). For instance, in metropolitan New York, about two thousand or so aficionados seem to repeatedly go to dinner dances hosted by various Armenian associations. Second, there is a reduction in the fourth generation in the informal ties with fellow Armenians, measured by visiting patterns and friendship networks (table 6.11). However, the magnitude of this drop is not as significant as that in formal ties.

While the first and second generations have acculturated to the larger American society, they have remained somewhat more entrenched structurally in Armenian communal life, both in the private sphere of their families and friends and in the public arena of Armenian church and voluntary associations (the average decrease from the first to the second generation is about 27 percentage points). Gordon's concept of "ethclass" describes the communal participation of the first two generations. Their intimate networks consist of fellow Armenians, often from the same country of origin or region of emigration, and, most important, of similar educational, occupational, and income backgrounds.

The patterns of ethnic involvement suggest that first- and second-generation individuals participate in two worlds, the Armenian and non-Armenian. Being a member of Armenian voluntary associations and going to events and activities does not preclude membership in the nonethnic environment (most significantly professional associations and mainstream political parties). Respondents proved that they can be equally integrated in both worlds, the Armenian and the American. The change takes place in the third generation when involvement in the Armenian community is reduced to a trickle, if not a halt. Sociability is an important function of collective structures for the immigrant generation. In later generations, one is less likely to look for events sponsored by Armenian voluntary associations to fulfill one's companionship needs.

Reliance on fellow Armenians in business and professional relations decreases with the passing of generations. Later-generation Armenian-Americans are less willing than earlier generations to patronize small businesses or stores owned and operated by Armenians if it is not convenient or if their goods and services are not competitive. Respondents in third and subsequent generations with their own businesses hesitate to employ fellow ethnics because they are concerned

about qualities, and credentials or do not want to be guilty of nepotism and favoritism. They are also less likely to intentionally seek the services of a doctor, a lawyer, a dentist, an accountant, or other professional because he/she is of Armenian descent. Nonetheless, about a third of later-generation respondents in the sample continued to deal with at least one Armenian-American professional, generally because that person was a relative or a friend (table 6.11).

Second-generation respondents compared to their parents' generation are more likely to have non-Armenian friends and marry non-Armenians (table 6.9). By the fourth generation, the proportion of Armenian friends decreases on all of the measures used in the survey (three best friends, proportion of Armenian friends now, friends when young). Beyond the second generation, Armenian exogamy becomes the norm. The small size of the community, the romantic love ideology, and the American value system that rewards merit and class over ascribed status overcome ethnocentric preference rules. There is an almost 90 percentage point decrease from the first to the fourth generation in respondents who marry Armenians (table 6.10). Other sources corroborate that in later generations the rate of Armenian intermarriage fluctuates around 90 percent.

### *Other Changes*

Armenian-Americans find little discrimination and prejudice against them at the present time in the United States. "Affective neutrality" describes the reaction of the ordinary American citizen vis-à-vis Armenianness. Social distance indicators show that the sample is closest, by marriage or friendship, to white Americans of European ancestry, notably, Italians, Jews, the Irish, and WASPs. Italians, Jews, and Armenians feel particularly close. They have shared the trials and tribulations of the big immigration waves and the xenophobic atmosphere of the host society in the early decades of the twentieth century. Later-generation respondents are most likely to have at least an acquaintance in most groups with large population concentrations in metropolitan New York and New Jersey. It should be noted though that individuals of Armenian descent are no less racist than other whites.

Armenian-Americans no longer fit the sojourner or "middlemen

minority form" that characterized the earliest immigrants. As individuals they have relinquished the dream of an eventual return to a real or mythical homeland. A few may visit the "spiritual homeland," historical territory presently spread between the Republics of Armenia and Turkey, or feel obligated to send monetary contributions to less fortunate Armenians in the diaspora, but home is in the United States. Armenian-Americans are here to stay. The traditional political parties, on the other hand, have found it more difficult to relinquish ideologies of an eventual return to an autonomous homeland because their rationale for being would have been at stake.

Recent developments in Armenia have changed the political and ideological impasse in diasporan relations. An independent and democratic Armenia is likely to become a center for Armenian life and culture. It would relieve the diasporan communities of the burden of cultural maintenance and at the same time become a source for revitalizing Armenian identity. Tired spirits who travel to the ancestral homeland would return energized and younger cohorts on study abroad programs would come back infused with pride in their roots and new language skills. In return, leaders in the Armenian-American community, as self-proclaimed representatives of the largest and most affluent diasporan collectivity, might play a more active role in supporting their fellow brethren with special technological assistance programs, foreign investments, and political advocacy. Many hope to build a symbiotic relationship between an autonomous Armenia and the diaspora similar to the one operant between Israel and American Jews.

Armenian-Americans are well-integrated into the larger American society; that is, in the use of the political machinery and the acceptance of the ideological precepts of the nation. They accept the ideals of democracy: equal opportunity, hard work, fair play, and the promise of the American Dream. There were no significant differences among the New York respondents in party affiliation; about a third were Democrats, another third Republicans, and the rest independents. The majority of respondents vote at presidential elections, and a few are volunteers during political campaigns. Several Armenian-Americans have run successfully for public office, locally and nationally. Younger cohorts are more likely to follow suit and surpass their predecessors.[13]

Is it possible to mobilize Armenian-Americans? Would instrumental goals be more powerful than ideological goals in mobilizing them? Armenian-Americans are too few in number and too spread out to become a powerful voting bloc; besides, there are no significant value differences that would cause serious conflict between them and other ethnic and nonethnic Americans in the urban opportunity structure. Even in Los Angeles where massive numbers of recent refugees from Soviet Armenia and elsewhere have strained the resources of the local government, serious class cleavages prevent Armenian-Americans from being mobilized as a cohesive group on one side of an issue against groups on the other side. Therefore, at the grass-roots level, it is highly improbable that domestic issues will cause hostility in Armenian-Americans' relations with their non-Armenian neighbors, co-workers, acquaintances, and friends.

Foreign policy issues are a different matter. Armenian-Americans do not endorse their government's protection of Turkey, nor the millions of aid dollars that are funneled to their historic enemy each year. Had the government of Turkey admitted and apologized for the Genocide this might not have been an issue. Imbued with American principles of justice and equity, they feel terribly wronged. Another potential source of contention might be the dismemberment of the Soviet Union. Even though the U.S. government has recently recognized the independence of the Republic of Armenia, the future policies of the United States remain unclear. Many Armenian-Americans sympathize with the goals of the Armenian population for self-determination and want to support them.

How do Armenian-Americans voice their political opinions? Those in the first and second generations are most likely to engage in the most active forms of political mobilization. They are likely to march up the streets of New York City to the headquarters of the United Nations with banners and signs; demonstrate in front of the Turkish Consulate in Los Angeles to protest Turkey's denial of the Genocide; visit politicians in Washington, DC to endorse a resolution that declares the Genocide a crime against humanity; hold candlelight vigils in front of the Soviet Mission to the United Nations in support of their brethren in Armenia; or send telegrams to Moscow and Washington to object to the pogroms and unfair treatment of Armenians in Azerbaijan.

Even among the first generation, those who resort to such conspicuous and strenuous forms of protest and advocacy are proportionally few. Nonetheless, the rate of mobilization of the Armenian-American population should not be underestimated. For example, 40 percent of the New York sample wrote letters to Congress regarding the Genocide. This is an impressive figure by any calculation. As expected, however, later generations are least likely to engage in grass-roots politics for Armenian causes. Most prefer to make financial contributions to professional lobbying agencies and let them pursue their political goals by proxy.[14]

In spite of a slow start, Armenian-Americans are maturing as an interest group in mainstream American politics. They are acquiring more political savvy in endorsing politicians that reflect their goals and aspirations, lobbying Congress for aid to the earthquake victims in Armenia, or granting visas to Armenian refugees from the Middle East stranded in European capitals. As an interest group, Armenian-Americans would like to receive recognition as a loyal constituency in the United States, as law-abiding, dutiful citizens. They also would like to see more of their people elevated to the coveted positions of this nation in politics, finance, military, and so on.

Thus their goals are both ideological and instrumental. Ordinary individuals of Armenian descent in the United States are unlikely to receive any concrete material benefits. However, by opening up opportunity structures, more of their ranks will achieve high status and thus indirectly enhance the well-being and prestige of Armenians in general. Also, when Armenian individuals or advocacy groups are able to broker financial, professional, or technical aid packages from the U.S. government, philanthropic foundations, or other agencies to help needy Armenians in the spiritual homeland or elsewhere in the diaspora, the psychological rewards are tremendous.

### *Exceptions to the Assimilation Model*

The fact remains that the assimilative profile of Armenian-Americans does not fully fit into Gordon's theoretical framework. The indicators of assimilation that change the least through the generations are the following: self-described identity, pride in one's roots, memory of the Genocide and feelings of anger toward its denial, centrality of

the family (see table 6.12). In other words, about 80 percent of later-generation respondents identified themselves as American-Armenian, Armenian-American, Armenian, or of Armenian descent. Over 90 percent felt very proud of their roots and its culture; they had a strong sense of peoplehood. The majority of respondents said that of the five closest people in their lives, two or more were family members. Familism statements, which measure strong feelings, goals, and mutual support of one's family, received high agreement scores (80 to 86 percent). Last but not least, 85 percent were angered by Turkey's denial of the Genocide and said justice needs to be done. Even in the fourth generation, Armenian-Americans were least likely to have Turkish acquaintances, let alone friends.

Nonetheless, this does not mean that these measures do not change over the generations, only the pace is much slower. For example, Armenian identity drops by 23 percentage points from the foreign-born generation to the fourth, and attitudes favoring change in Armenian names drop by 12 percentage points. Attitudes toward the importance of the family drop an average of 26 percentage points between the immigrant and later generations. Even though the Genocide is fervently felt by almost every Armenian-American, about 10 percent of the fourth generation were indifferent to its denial by Turkish governments, and 5 percent said that one should forget the past. Fewer proportions of the fourth-generation attend requiem services (19 percent, a 39 percentage point decrease from the first generation) and even fewer participate in commemorative rallies, marches and demonstrations (12.5 percent, a 28 percentage point decrease from the first generation).

Identity and familism do not measure actual behavior. Overall, American-born generations profess verbal allegiance to their ethnic heritage, but they are less likely to transform it into action. One may continue to feel very close to one's family, as all of the indicators showed, but spend most of one's leisure time with one's friends. Indeed, less than one-third of the parents in the sample contacted their children, by person or phone, daily. Frequency of contact among other family members was much lower. Affect exceeds action in family relations as in most things. Assimilation can continue its course, at least for some time, without substantially decreasing levels of Armenian identity, sense of peoplehood and familism. These findings

confirm that assimilation and ethnicity, in its symbolic form, can coexist. It does not have to be a zero-sum equation.

Armenian identity does not wane with higher socioeconomic achievement; an attribute characteristic of symbolic Armenian-Americans. Upper-middle-class status screens off the unpleasant aspects of ethnicity, thus making it easier for people to acknowledge and identify with their ancestral origins. Middle- and upper-middle-class Armenian-Americans who identify with their immigrant roots feel very close to family members and maintain a large network of Armenian institutional and communal activities. Owing to their predominance in middle- to upper-middle social classes, symbolic Armenian-Americans in the early generations are increasingly likely to define Armenianness and set the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion in communal life. The events sponsored by Armenian-American voluntary associations are increasingly geared toward the life-style, interests, and budget of upper-middle-class status, such as golf tournaments, debutante balls, and black tie testimonials for mainstream politicians. Tickets and donations for participation in such events are exclusionary. They are well beyond the capacity of working-class incomes, thus leaving out Armenian-Americans who have not achieved upward mobility. This contradicts the hitherto expressed assumption that ethnic allegiance and maintenance is synonymous with working-class status. Rather, if corporate or traditional ethnicity is strongly correlated with working-class status, symbolic ethnicity is then an upper-middle-class phenomenon.

### *New Immigration and Rejuvenation of Communal Structures*

The influx of large numbers of immigrants from the Middle East and Soviet Union in the last twenty-five years or so has had significant repercussions on Armenianness in the United States. This has changed the ratio of American-born to immigrant stock and the age distribution of the latter. Two-thirds of the immigrant generation in the survey came to the United States after World War II. These newest arrivals do not conform to the stereotype of the illiterate peasant. Like other post-1965 legal immigrants, they tend to be more educated, have a higher proportion of professionals among them, and come with greater financial resources than in the past. The overall impact of this wave of

immigration was to slow down the rate of assimilation of Armenian-American communal structures.

Newcomers who predominantly speak Armenian have rejuvenated tired and depleted voluntary associations established by the first wave of Armenian immigrants. They have infused new blood into several church communities, fortifying Armenian choirs, adding to the number of officiating clergy, deacons, and acolytes. They have lent their expertise and knowledge of the language and culture to promote full-time and part-time schools, press and radio, theater, popular songs, and the traditional Armenian political parties. At the same time, they have been a ready-made audience for the events and activities sponsored by voluntary associations and other institutions. The more educated among the newest immigrants, especially those who received their university education in the United States, in partnership with the second generation have founded institutions that are more congruent with the reality of American life and symbolic ethnicity, such as university chairs for Armenian studies, research institutes, professional associations, and political action groups.

Where there was no infrastructure, or it was already appropriated by the American-born, the newest immigrants proceeded to create their own organizations according to their understanding of Armenianness and the way they had been habituated in the Middle East, Eastern Europe, Soviet Armenia, or wherever they came from. The purpose of these compatriotic or other associations remains twofold: First, they provide familiarity and companionship to recent immigrants experiencing cultural shock. Psychologically, socially, they cushion their transition into the new environment. Second, they promote the goals and norms of the emergent Armenian-American subculture and turn their members into dutiful citizens of the United States. That is, they speed both their acculturation process into the ethnic world and their economic and political integration into mainstream society.

As with other ethnic groups, the newest arrivals and the American-born have not coexisted in total harmony. Conflict and animosity over their understanding and expression of their Armenianness is common. This will probably continue to be the status quo until the newcomers acculturate further and their American-born children mature. Indeed, the Armenian-American community is not a monolithic structure; it is more appropriate to speak of communities. These subcommunities are

crisscrossed by allegiances to place of birth; by recency of immigration; by religious affiliation; by political and ideological sympathies; by age; by life-style and interest; and by education, occupation, and income levels. Except for those in leadership positions and those in intellectual circles, there is very little contact between the rank and file of these subcommunities.

The Armenians of Los Angeles deserve special mention. A large proportion of the post-1965 immigrants, especially the overwhelming majority of the Soviet Armenian refugees have made Los Angeles their destination. Los Angeles has become a sort of Mecca for traditional Armenianness. It has the highest per capita concentration of Armenian schools, churches, voluntary associations, newspapers, radio and television programs, nursing homes, and clubs. It also has significant proportions of independent professional firms and other businesses, not to mention the speciality food stores and restaurants. Since 1980, Greater Los Angeles has even had an Armenian telephone directory—a bilingual edition with business and residential listings.[15]

In Los Angeles, the supply side of Armenianness increases the likelihood of chance encounters between people of Armenian descent in their daily lives and business dealings. It keeps Armenian identity alive, but the cost may be too high. Armenianness in Los Angeles is highly visible and conspicuous, especially among the less affluent who cannot afford the more exclusive neighborhoods in the suburbs, the elite private schools, or the luxurious shopping malls, restaurants, and recreational facilities. Indeed, many have no option but to settle in places like Hollywood, which has become an Armenian ghetto. When ethnicity is no longer a choice, it risks increasing prejudice and discrimination against group members. Since many of the refugees who arrived in the 1980s from Soviet Armenia and the Middle East are poor, not well-educated, and unfamiliar with the American way of life; and since they have already developed a reputation for breaking local laws and going on welfare, stereotypes have inevitably surfaced. For many of the less advantaged, Armenianness is likely to remain an ascribed status.[16] That runs contrary to a century of Armenian experience in America and a solid record of personal and group achievements. In conclusion, lest the reader forget, Los Angeles is not representative of Armenian-Americans or of the Armenian-American community.

*Resumé: Assimilation Rates for Sample*

The rate of cultural assimilation for the sample is estimated at 48 percent, structural assimilation at 30 percent, and overall assimilation at 23 percent. These rates confirm Gordon's predictions for initial acculturation followed by structural assimilation. These rates are also indicative of the large proportion of foreign-born Armenians in the study (37.5 percent; 25 percent of sample came after WW II). Overall, behavioral measures show the greatest degree of change as American-born descendants of Armenian immigrants become more and more distanced from their roots, its culture, and communal life. The data prove that later-generation Armenian-Americans have successfully achieved assimilation. The average decrease in indicators of assimilation from the first to the fourth generation is 60 percentage points.

What then is the probability of the continuity of Armenian-American collective structures? Even though reliable demographic statistics are not available, I have used whatever estimates there are to project the size and growth rate of the Armenian-American community of metropolitan New York and New Jersey in one generation's time (thirty years). I have used the rates generated in this study and other published estimates. For the birth and death rates, I used U.S. population figures. These calculations show that if the rate of assimilation of the fourth generation is used, the number of those who identify as Armenian-American will remain more or less the same (1.8 percent increase) in the next generation in spite of births and immigration.[17]

The reader is reminded that these are very gross estimates, and more seriously, they reflect the xenophobic past of American society in the first half of the twentieth century and the cultural baggage of the earliest Armenian immigrants. Besides, human ingenuity has often proved statistical predictions wrong. This should be taken merely as an exercise for those trying to plan the future of Armenian collective structures and to set policies for religious, educational, and other institutions—a sort of "worst case scenario" if no changes alter the given structural and cultural variables.

Two important criteria make these projections implausible. First, the larger American society has been more tolerant of sidestream ethnicity in the last couple of decades. Ethnicity remains an important social boundary in modern American society, and the emergence of

ethnic-based interest groups is generally welcomed, if not encouraged. Second, post-1965 Armenian immigrants are not peasants nor are they overwhelmed by the technological superiority of their host society as was the case in the late nineteenth century. Social forces that shape Armenianness in the contemporary United States are very different from those that were operant during the last hundred years. History does not repeat itself in exactly the same fashion.

The viability of the collective forms of Armenianness in the United States in the future will in the final analysis depend heavily on the success of a variety of recruiting and socializing agencies and the ability of traditional institutions to adapt to the changes warranted by symbolic Armenianness. If future cohorts of American-born Armenians are not taught how to appreciate their ancestral heritage, how can they be blamed for forsaking it? For individual forms, on the other hand, the family remains the most effective cradle of identity, pride, and affection.

## Components of Symbolic Armenianness

For the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the immigrant generation, Armenianness is no longer the taken for granted way of life, nor an immersion in an ethnic culture and communal relations. For American-born generations, Armenian identity is a "preference" (Zenner 1985, 118) and Armenianness is a "state of mind" (Crispino 1980, 160). The behavior of later-generation descendants is not Armenian in form or content. Yet, they feel Armenian, they identify themselves as American-Armenian, and they are fiercely proud of most things and people Armenian. Armenianness becomes voluntary, conscious, rationalistic, segmental, transitory, sporadic, that is, symbolic. Sentiment and convenience become the *modus vivendi* for maintenance of almost all aspects of Armenianness. Feelings run high, but when it comes to behavioral participation, convenience is the key.

With increasing generational presence, in the United States, with non-Armenian denominational affiliation or no religious preference, with indifference to Armenian politics, with mixed parentage, and with higher education, Armenianness loses it traditional attributes. One can say one is an Armenian without speaking Armenian, marrying an Armenian, doing business with Armenians, belonging to

an Armenian church, joining Armenian voluntary associations, or participating in the events and activities sponsored by such organizations. Armenianness becomes more individualistic; that is, it is tailored to suit the personal needs and interests of symbolic Armenians. Diversity in forms of expression is another characteristic. Being Armenian means different things to different people. It can be any one or a combination of the following: church affiliation, network of relatives and friends, bonding with fellow Armenians, positive feelings of belongingness, a taste for Armenian cuisine, and so on. Armenianness changes from an emphasis on behavioral patterns to mental reconstructions of what individual Armenian-Americans think Armenianness is.

American-born men and women of Armenian descent do not callously discard or consciously plot to sabotage the cultural heritage of their ancestors. Rather, the cultural baggage brought over to America with the immigrant generation ceases to be functional. Two intertwined dynamics propel the emergence of a symbolic Armenian subculture in the United States: First, there are the requirements of the subsistence technologies and modes of production. More specifically, the Armenian immigrants who came to the United States in the early 1900s moved in a short while from a predominantly agricultural to a predominantly industrial society. Ottoman Turkey, especially the hinterland where most of the Armenian population had lived for centuries, consisted of agrarian, homogeneous, folklike communities where social relations were mostly face-to-face, diffuse, personal, enduring. It was a world where work and leisure were not separated in time and space and the absence of modern means of transportation and communication isolated small collectivities physically and socially from each other. The United States, on the other hand, was an industrial, urbanized, highly heterogeneous society where social relations were specific, purposeful, and impersonal, except for one's intimate ties, which were confined to one's private world of family, friends, and ethnic group or religious congregation. Inevitably, some of the great and little traditions of the Armenian people that reflected the agrarian environment they came from soon became obsolete in the densely populated American cities they now called home.

Second, the constraints imposed by the specific blend of American political, ideological, and social conditions also influenced the

emergent Armenian subculture. In other words, the post-Genocide Armenian immigrants to France and the United States entered similar types of societies based on industrial modes of production; however, the specific cultural and structural conditions in each nation were different. In the United States, Armenians found an opportunity structure that was more open, relatively lower levels of prejudice and discrimination, a host society tolerant of ethnic subcommunities and religious pluralism, a pervasive ideology that encouraged hard work and individual accomplishment, and a public education system that made such achievement possible.

Therefore, many of the behavioral and attitudinal patterns that characterize symbolic Armenianness in the United States are by necessity by-products of the particular postindustrial economic system they live in today. For example, as inhabitants of a "time famine" culture, Americans value convenience. This also explains its importance in behavioral manifestations of Armenianness. Similarly, the current mate selection process dictates that future cohorts of Armenians will get married to those they fall in love with, irrespective of ethnic and religious background. Since Armenian-Americans not active in communal circles have little probability of fortuitous encounters with fellow Armenians, their chances of intermarriage are very high.

Likewise, the sentimentalization of symbolic Armenianness follows a general trend toward steeping one's intimate social relations with affect. The evidence for this trend comes from various studies that have observed historical changes in the last century or so in the United States in husband-wife relations, parent-child relations, grandparent-grandchild relations, and friendship ties. I explain: One, the romantic love complex has been institutionalized as a prerequisite for marriage in industrial societies since the late nineteenth century (Goode 1970; Shorter 1977). Love is also the glue that keeps spouses tied to their matrimonial vows. The long-range pattern of climbing divorce rates throughout this century (with the exception of those who produced the baby boomers) indicate that marriages are increasingly built on volatile sentiments rather than economic and social calculations.

Two, Viviana Zelizer (1985) has demonstrated that in the United States between the 1870s and the 1930s, there was a radical transformation in the cultural meaning of a child fourteen years of age or younger. The definition of a child changed from a commodity-like

entity with instrumental motives to an exaltation of its sentimental, intrinsic worth. Instead of contributing to the welfare of the family unit through his/her labor in the fields or as hired hand, a child became a consumer, a source of expenditure because it had become the object of his/her parents' love and affection. Any harm that befell a child such as a serious illness, kidnapping, or death was now interpreted as an emotionally insurmountable experience for the parents. Instead of investing in quantity, parents started to value quality; they sacrificed themselves for the welfare of their child. Every child became unique, precious, irreplaceable. The family system changed from an adult-centered to a child-centered unit. In sum, the transition was from economically "useful" to "useless" but emotionally "priceless" child.

Three, relationships between grandparents and grandchildren became likewise sentimental. Grandparents were no longer the stern, remote, authoritarian figures of the agrarian system. Instead of obligation, the bond between generations came to be based on sentiment. A new style of grandparenting developed, one based on egalitarian or joking relationships that has been called a "companionate style" (Cherlin and Furstenberg 1986). Four, even friendship ties came to be infused with sentiments. By the late nineteenth century, friendships between women were seen as special, heartfelt (Cott 1977). Friends were no longer chosen for proximity, but for their intrinsic worth and compatibility.

Since symbolic Armenianness functions in the sidestream; that is, it is expressed during one's leisure time, in one's private life, with one's intimates, it has, like the other interpersonal ties, become imbued with sentiment. Symbolic Armenian-Americans feel very close to fellow Armenian-Americans, even Armenians in the diaspora. After all, one's ethnic group is an extension of one's self. Co-ethnics share the same ancestors, myths of origin, the same bloodline, and the same history; they are in a sense bonded like one gigantic kin grouping. The ties of Armenian-Americans with fellow Armenians are more expressive than instrumental. For instance, when the earthquake hit Soviet Armenia in 1988, symbolic Armenian-Americans felt very keenly the agony and misery of their compatriots thousands of miles away. However, this did not make them desire to become structurally embedded in Armenian networks. They did not join Armenian voluntary associations nor attend dinner dances.

In sum, the Armenian subculture emerging in the United States is more congruent with changes in the political economy and the American historical experience than the traditional culture of the immigrant generation. I have constructed an ideal typology of the collective and individual forms of symbolic Armenianness. It consists of six components which I will analyze next.

### *Sidestream Ethnicity*

Symbolic Armenian-Americans display signs of their Armenianness on their person, possessions, home. Hanging a photograph of Mount Ararat, wearing a T-shirt with Armenian lettering, even using the Armenian credit card[18] satisfies their urge to express their heritage. They flaunt such tokens of their ancestral roots for everyone to see because they believe Armenianness is something one should be proud of. Similarly, they are unlikely to change their Armenian name or drop the "ian" ending. Armenian-Americans are not ashamed of their status and who they are. The higher socioeconomic standing of most Armenian-Americans at the present time decreases the stigma of ethnic affiliation, and their social mobility in the United States makes them proud of their group's achievements. Moreover, the increasing legitimacy of sidestream ethnicity makes it possible, even fashionable or quaint, to be of ethnic descent at the present time in large urban centers. To be a symbolic Armenian today in metropolitan New York, Boston, Chicago, or San Francisco is far less costly than it might have been in the past or in other places.

It is worth repeating that there is no "return" in the third generation toward behavioral forms of ethnicity. Furthermore, the so-called "revival" or "resurgence" of ethnicity in the post-civil rights era has not meant a resumption of traditional or behavioral forms of ethnicity. The change has been in the greater tolerance of symbolic ethnicity in the larger society. Armenian-Americans are first and foremost citizens of the United States of America. They are proud, grateful, and in their opinion exemplary citizens and as such their primary allegiance is to this nation and to the American Dream. Ethnic expression remains most acceptable in the sidestream; on the "teamsports level" to be enjoyed during one's leisure time and not to interfere with the serious

business of earning a living or the democratic principles of this United States.

*Affect Replaces Action*

Symbolic Armenians are highly unlikely to be mobilized at the grass-roots level in the urban opportunity structure as an "ethclass" group in competition with other groups for coveted resources. First- and second-generation Armenian-Americans might be mobilized (though weakly) for ideological reasons. A small fraction of the Armenian population might be summoned to hold candlelight vigils, march up the streets of New York, Los Angeles, or Washington, DC with banners and signs as they did in solidarity with the Karabagh movement in Soviet Armenia and in protest against the pogroms in Soviet Azerbaijan. The vast majority of men and women of Armenian descent will at the utmost be moved to contribute financially for a worthy cause.

The Genocide remains at the forefront of Armenian collective consciousness. The overwhelming majority of Armenian-Americans feel angry and outraged about its denial, the revisionist historical interpretations, and the concerted media campaigns aimed at whitewashing Turkey's reputation. However, commemorative events and requiem services held annually around April 24 attract only a fraction of the Armenian-American public. Somewhat more people might be induced to write letters to Congress to help pass a resolution making April 24 "A Day of Remembrance of Man's Inhumanity to Man," because it is easier to draft a letter from a facsimile provided by lobbying institutions in the comfort of one's home than to attend a public rally in Times Square.

International events of a traumatic nature can periodically refocus the attention of Armenian-Americans on their Armenianness, stirring them ideologically into heightened levels of self-awareness. Following the earthquake in Soviet Armenia in December 1988, unprecedented numbers of men and women of Armenian descent who had never been involved in communal life flocked to contribution centers to volunteer their time, energy, and know-how. Even more people were moved to send in their checks. Nonetheless, the impact of such incidences is unlikely to be of long duration, or to mobilize them back into a

corporate group. Dinner dances and other activities hosted by Armenian voluntary associations are highly unlikely to appeal to symbolic Armenians. To derive pleasure from such collective entertainment, one's structural ties must be densely populated with Armenian acquaintances, friends, and relatives, which is not the case for those in later generations. In addition, diasporan relations for symbolic Armenian-Americans are elusive. Travel to "spiritual homelands" is infrequent. Financial commitment remains the backbone of their sense of diasporan peoplehood. At best, traumatic events rekindle identity questioning and the reassessing of peoplehood boundaries, keeping them from a premature death.

The elements of the Armenian culture that are learned easily without resorting to specialized agencies have a higher probability of being practiced. Retention of Armenian cuisine requires cookbooks, in English, of which several are readily available, and ingredients that are increasingly sold in local supermarkets. By contrast, reading and writing Armenian requires schools, teachers, textbooks, and the concerted efforts of parents and students to attend classes and do homework, not to mention financial expenditure, and the valuable time and energy spent in learning Armenian rather than doing something else. Therefore, cooking and eating Armenian food once in a while is the most widespread mode of Armenian manifestation.

With the greater acceptance of ethnicity in the United States, festivals, food fairs, street bazaars, parades, and the like have become more popular and visible. All these are events and activities that do not need knowledge of the language, the culture, or history. They are generally considered to be 'fun' for the whole family. Non-Armenian spouses and children of mixed parentage can participate in such events without having the feeling of being an outsider. They have few restrictions; one can spend as little or as much of one's time and money as one wants. Since such events make few demands on participants, it is no wonder that they are popular with symbolic Armenians. Moreover, festivals celebrate ethnicity per se. They exemplify the pluralism and diversity of the American population without being too serious or offensive.

Symbolic Armenianness pertains to the realm of emotions. As such, it fulfills significant psychological functions in modern highly mechanized environments. It provides comfort, warmth,

belongingness, roots. It offers relief from the bland homogeneity of mainstream culture by enriching one's life with colorful epics, myths, great and little traditions, and a horde of social bonds. Given the small size and dispersal of Armenians in the United States, it is a particularly fortuitous occasion to encounter another Armenian in the course of one's business or professional dealings. It makes one feel unique, precious, one in a million.

Armenianness is a form of cultural capital. Especially for geographically and socially mobile Armenian-Americans, it provides ready access to a whole network of social relations and a wealth of information. Hyphenated Armenians are willing to say they are of Armenian descent when they are asked, and when the situation is to their advantage. In business transactions with fellow ethnics, one may say "I am Armenian too," to enhance rapport and make a sale. Political candidates claim Armenian descent to solicit campaign contributions and votes. Business owners, self-employed professionals, and ethnic brokers (e.g., clergymen, academics, singers, editors of ethnic press) are more likely to activate their Armenian ties and networks than those employed in bureaucratic jobs because of possible gains in ethnic clientele. Their solidarity is mostly organic, in the Durkheimian sense. On the other hand, symbolic Armenians will only consent to buy products in an Armenian store, or consult an Armenian professional, or vote for an Armenian candidate, if and only if, all other things are equal.

Armenian-Americans are proud of the accomplishments of their fellow ethnics. They do not miss an occasion to remind their non-Armenian friends, co-workers, and acquaintances which celebrities are of Armenian descent. However, few have read the works of William Saroyan, or visited a museum to view a retrospective of Arshile Gorky's paintings, or attended a concert to listen to Alan Hovhaness conduct his music, or gone to a theater or a movie house to see Eric Bogosian perform, live or on film, or bought tickets for a tennis match to see Andre Agassi play. Strong sentiments toward people and things Armenian do not easily translate into behavior. In the concretization of ethnic action, convenience is generally the rule.

### *Knowledge Banks and Voluntary Associations*

The institutional forms that have the greatest probability for longevity are those that are, like the personal forms of ethnicity, symbolic. There are those institutions that I call "knowledge banks" that are analogous to a dying sage in his urgency to codify his wealth of knowledge before his demise. University chairs for ethnic studies; research centers; display cases or wings in museums; publications of cookbooks or traditional handicrafts; collections of artifacts, old photographs, folk costumes, and the codification and documentation of musical forms, folk dances, folk tales, and customs all exemplify the passing of the mundane, but living tradition into the realm of the emblematic. Symbolic Armenian-Americans consciously seek to conserve their cultural heritage. Their higher educational attainment equips them with the know-how to do so.

Knowledge banks function as vehicles for enhancing status and increasing self-esteem. They are a way for Armenian-Americans to carve a niche for their cultural heritage in the pantheon of mainstream knowledge. By presenting it in language and formats that are readily acceptable to the American intellectual elite, the Armenian culture becomes more acceptable in their own eyes. Their reference group is the larger American public. They turn to it for legitimacy, for acknowledgment of their value as a people and the worthiness of their cultural heritage. Similarly, an artist, a writer, a performer of Armenian descent is claimed back into the fold of the Armenian world only when he or she has been successful in the mainstream.

For symbolic Armenian-Americans, voluntary associations need to combine an instrumental motive in conjunction with ethnicity in order to attract members. Associations that combine professional interests, scholarly or academic interests, (mainstream) politics, dance, sports, or other recreational interests with ethnic allegiance are more likely to be successful. Symbolic Armenian-Americans insist that the voluntary associations and institutions they want to support be run professionally. They have little patience for amateurs, inefficient bureaucracies, and mediocre results. Moreover, such organizations should not be greedy institutions; they must not be too demanding of one's time, energy, or financial resources.

### *Quest for Armenianness*

The inherent tensions in modern American society of increasing secularization on the one hand and increasing quest for community and meaningfulness on the other will induce some Armenian-Americans to look to the Armenian Apostolic church for a rich spiritual experience. They do so consciously, rationally. It is no longer the blind faith, or indifference, and taken-for-granted affiliation of traditional Armenians. Consequently, they want to understand and study the doctrines of the church and the significance of the rituals. In order to meet the sacred needs of those in later generations, the Apostolic church must concentrate more on its unique Christian tradition and less on the perpetuation of Armenianness. It also has to use more English in the services and instruction manuals, since the vast majority of symbolic Armenian-Americans do not read and write Armenian.

Similarly, there are small numbers of Armenian-Americans who are interested in the secular heritage of their ancestors: the language, the history, the arts, the music, the crafts, and so on. Some, such as the academics, the clergy, the writers, the musicians, and so on, will make a career of their Armenianness. However, most will turn this quest for Armenianness into a hobby. Lectures and seminars attract large crowds because they are the least demanding form of instruction, and on top of that they are a form of entertainment. University courses, whether in the United States or abroad (e.g., Venice, Yerevan), mostly serve students who take them for credit, or the aficionados. Symbolic Armenian-American parents do not advocate all-day Armenian schooling because they believe it is un-American. Supplementary forms of ideological socialization of future generations, such as summer camps and professional internship programs, are more acceptable and popular because the Armenianness they propagate is in essence symbolic.

### *Economic Solvency*

Making financial contributions to Armenian nonprofit organizations is undeniably the most prevalent method of token participation in the Armenian world. It is convenient and makes one feel good about oneself. While it sustains the appropriate social distance from the old-

world milieu, it keeps the symbolic Armenian-Americans safe from contamination and discomfort. Nonetheless, it is predicted that contributions will dwindle with the passage of generations as ties and interest decrease. Symbolic Armenian-Americans need more aggressive, professional fund-raising techniques to move them to contribute. Because of the widespread individual variations in conceptualizations of Armenianness, men and women of Armenian descent in the United States will only make their deductible donations to the specific projects that appeal to their professional, religious, or artistic interests or those they associate with memories of their grandparents or other childhood episodes.

In many respects, the economic solvency of Armenian institutions and voluntary associations will determine the survival of Armenian-Americans as a collectivity. As such, financial contributions are highly significant for ethnic maintenance and should not be dismissed as tokens. As long as contributions keep pouring in, it will be possible to sustain communal forms of Armenianness. When Armenianness becomes symbolic, there is a shift from reliance on voluntarism and amateurish projects to an increasing demand for professionalism and efficiency in the administration of the ethnic organizations and the events they host. With the appropriate financial resources, it is possible to organize, commission, and host any number of activities. With professional management, advertising, and artists or performers of Armenian descent it is possible to draw larger audiences (not necessarily of Armenian origin) to concerts, art shows, and the like. Opening up Armenian art and culture to wider audiences has a higher probability of ensuring its survival.

### *The Family*

Ultimately, it is within the family that Armenianness is nourished and sustained, and it is within the family that it finds its most frequent expression. Armenian traditions and rituals, or what are believed to be so, provide meaning, color, and drama and spice up people's routine existence. Most prominently, Armenianness is expressed during rites of passage and holidays. Typical examples are weddings, funerals, and christenings in an Armenian church. Christmas, Easter, anniversaries, and birthdays are also flavored with connotations of Armenianness,

even though there is often nothing Armenian about them except maybe a dish or two on the menu. Family gatherings for whatever occasion inevitably mean food, hospitality, and generosity. The most recurrent and salient mental reconstructions of what Armenianness is for most symbolic Armenian-Americans are such warm family atmospheres.

Armenian grandmothers and grandfathers also have a special place in this symbolic firmament. They are remembered with reverence and nostalgia for bygone days and the stories they used to tell of even older times, before one's existence, and of places one has rarely known. Grandparents are the most tangible link of that human chain that extends to the spiritual homeland, to ancient Armenian forebears, and to fellow Armenians, past and present. Symbolic Armenianness, when all is said and done, is firmly logged in people's feelings and sentiments.

## Notes

1. The units of analyses were taken from a national sample of SMSAs - standard metropolitan statistical area.
2. Linguistic diversity in the United States is attributed to immigration for the first generation; additionally, linguistic homogamy or ethnic endogamy perpetuates this diversity for American-born generations (Stevens and Schoen 1988, 277).
3. Noteworthy are psychosocial characteristics associated with interreligious marriages. Heiss (1960, 53) has found that the religiously intermarried tend to have nonreligious parents, have greater dissatisfaction with parents when young, greater family strife, less early family integration, and greater emancipation from parents at time of marriage.
4. In this section I have analyzed the married respondents in the New York sample only (N = 493). The married make up 70 percent, the widowed 10 percent, and the divorced or separated 5 percent of the total sample. The married sample includes all these categories. The never married, 86 respondents or 14.9 percent of the total sample, are excluded from analysis.
5. As mentioned in chapter 1, these results underestimate the proportion of the assimilated who have completely lost touch with people and things Armenian; thus, they also underestimate the proportion of the intermarried.
6. The exceptions are few. Foreign-born Armenians who date or marry third-generation Armenians soon realize that their ethnic homogamy is often deceptive. Significant cultural differences drive a wedge between their worldviews. For a case study see Mary Ann Aposhian, "Clinging to Ethnic Heritage in America: Study Compares Extent of Assimilation between Earlier Generation, New Arrivals," *Armenian International Magazine*, February 1991, pp. 33-36.
7. Boudjikanian-Keuroghlian writes: "Les célibataires agés(es) sont nombreux dans la communauté. Conditionés par les contradictions que vit la collectivité, leur

existences se déroulent à la lisiére des deux mondes français et arméniens. . . . Désorientées dans leur vie affective, solicitées par des aspirations contradictoires, elle souhaitent en vain un compagnon arménien" (1978, 112-3).

8. These services are Armenian Dating Service in Stow (MA); Armenian Singles Group in Downey (CA); Armenian Singles Unlimited in Houston (TX); Hye Mates, Inc. in Clawson (MI). When I called the 800 number of Armenian Connection, a recorded message reiterated the same contents as the ad. For an annual fee, photos and specifics are provided on Armenian professionals nationwide. I surmise that more later-generation Armenian-Americans might try the services of these organizations than those in earlier generations and more women than men.
9. Apostolics comprised 64.2 percent of the sample, Protestant Armenians were 9.7 percent, Catholic Armenians were 3.8 percent, "other" denominations were 16 percent, and those with "no religion" made up 6.3 percent of the sample (N = 576).
10. See Matthew Jendian 1991, "Intermarriage among Armenian-Americans in Fresno County: A Sociological Perspective," *Hye Sharzhoom*, supplement to *Daily Collegian - The Newspaper of the California State University* 12 (4): 3.
11. The comparative figures for Italian-Americans in Crispino's (1980, 113) study show that 3 percent agree that children should marry co-ethnics while 34 percent agree that children should marry of the same religion. It appears that Armenian preference norms are somewhat more salient than those of Italian-Americans. This may be a result of the large numbers of recent immigrants in the sample.
12. It is interesting to compare the opinions of other recent immigrant groups to the United States with this sample. Simon (1983) reports on Soviet Jewish and Vietnamese immigrants, the majority of whom have lived in America for an average of two years. She interviewed fifty pairs of mothers and adolescent daughters (ages fifteen to twenty), and fifty pairs of fathers and sons in each refugee group. All Soviet Jewish fathers wanted their sons to marry a Jew, 40 percent of them preferred a Soviet Jew. The majority of the sons expected to match their father's hopes in marrying Jews, only a third of them said ethnic and religious differences were not important. All Soviet Jewish mothers expected their daughters to marry Jews and Soviet Jews were preferred over American Jews. On the other hand, 24 percent of the daughters thought ethnicity was not important. All but 10 percent of daughters expected to marry Jews. Likewise, Vietnamese parents wanted their children to marry within the ethnic fold or with other Asian-Americans. Overall, Jewish identity was more salient than Soviet identity. It is also the case with the immigrant Armenian groups, their Armenian (ethnic) identity is more salient than their identity to their country of origin or religious denominations.
13. See Yvette Harpootian and Margaret Simonian, "The Pursuit of Power: Young Armenians Learn the Governing Game," *Armenian International Magazine*, July 1991, pp. 16-19.
14. Professional lobbyists seem to think that Armenian-Americans do not engage in grass-roots politics. According to one of them, "letter-writing is one of the most important elements that affect the legislation. Armenians are behind any other group in that respect." Maybe the Genocide is an exception to the general pattern because it is so close to people's hearts. In general the Armenian lobby in Washington, DC seems to be in its infancy; insiders concur that they lack

coordination and focus. See Tony Halpin and Vartan Oskanian, "Voices on the Hill: The Armenian Lobby, How Effective is it?" *Armenian International Magazine,* April 1991, pp. 10-20.

15. *Armenian Directory* is published by Bernard Berberian, Uniarts Advertising, Glendale, CA.
16. For example see Viken Berberian, "Coming to America . . . Without Rubles, Riches or Refugee Status," *Armenian International Magazine,* June 1991, pp. 14-23.
17. Size of Armenian-American population in metropolitan New York and New Jersey = 100,000 (chap. 1). Birth rate = 1.8 births per woman + 15 percent infertility (*Population Bulletin* 1982). Sex ratio = 45.5 percent (chap. 1). Death rate = 6 per 1,000 population (*Population Bulletin* 1982). Immigration = 340 per year (estimated from 2,000 per year, of which 17 percent settle in NY and NJ; Takooshian 1986-87, 142). Assimilation = 60 percent for fourth generation (this chap.). Generation = 30 years.

    Population - assimilation + immigration - deaths + births = population projections
    (100,000) - (60,000) + (10,200) - (18,000) + (69,615) = 101,815

18. A couple of Armenian entrepreneurs have initiated and marketed in the last several years the Armenian Exchange U.S.A. MasterCard credit card. Mount Ararat features prominently on the card. In their advertisements, the sponsors state: "Every time you use your card you'll be identifying your affiliation with a great people, and you'll be showing your pride and loyalty to them." Furthermore, the sponsors pledge to donate 25 percent of their net profits to religious, cultural, educational, and charitable Armenian organizations. For an assessment of the card and its sponsors see Viken Berberian, "Plastic Patriots? Charges and Countercharges: The Facts on an Armenian Credit Card's Worthiness," *Armenian International Magazine,* July 1991, pp. 27-30.

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*Window: A View of the Armenian Church* (Reseda, CA)
*Zoryan Notes* (Cambridge, MA)

# Appendix

## The Questionnaire Package

This appendix provides the reader with a complete package of the questionnaire used in data collection. First, there is a letter from the sponsor of the project and its Armenian translation; a second letter from the researcher. This is followed by an exact replica of the questionnaire. Next, there is a request for the snowball sample that was enclosed with the questionnaire and the follow-up postcard. The last entry is a notice that appeared in the ethnic press and was sent to all the community leaders interviewed.

Columbia University in the City of New York | New York, N.Y. 10027

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY Fayerweather Hall

April 15, 1986

It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you Anny Bakalian. She is a doctoral student in Sociology here at Columbia University. She is writing her dissertation on Armenians and their Descendants in America: A Study of the Patterns of Ethnic Manifestation in New York/ New Jersey. No comprehensive survey of Armenians in the USA has ever been done.

The results of this study will increase our understanding of persisting ethnicity and assimilation in America. Such information should also be invaluable to Armenian organizations, community leaders and citizens in planning policies and programs.

The research findings will appear initially in the form of a doctoral dissertation at Columbia University. And it is hoped it will be published shortly thereafter.

We urge you to complete your questionnaire and return it now. What we sociologists call a probability sample is essential to ensure good results. As your name has been drawn in such a random sample, your answers are very important. Let us assure you that your answers will remain anonymous and confidential.

Anny Bakalian and I appreciate your assistance in helping her carry forward this important and noteworthy project.

Yours sincerely

Bernard Barber

BERNARD BARBER
Professor
Project Sponsor

Columbia University in the City of New York | New York, N.Y. 10027

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

Fayerweather Hall

Ապրիլ 15, 1986

Սիրելի Բարեկամներ,

Հաճոյքով կը ներկայացնեմ ձեզի իմ աշակերտներէս Անի Պազալեանը, թեկնածու ``Փի-Էյճ-Տի`` տիտղոսին Գոլոմպիա Համալսարանի Ընկերաբանութեան ամպիոնին: Անոր աւարտաճառին նիւթն է ``ԸՆԿԵՐԱԲԱՆԱԿԱՆ ՈՒՍՈՒՄՆԱՍԻՐՈՒԹԻՒՆ ՄԸ՝ ՀԱՅԵՐԸ ՆԻՒ ԵՈՐՔԻ ԵՒ ՆԻՒ ՃԸՐՋԻՒ ՄԷՋ``: Տակաւին այսպիսի ամբողջական աշխատասիրութիւն մը չէ կատարուած Ամերիկայի Միացեալ Նահանգաց մէջ:

Այս ուսումնասիրութիւնը ի յայտ պիտի բերէ հայ ազգին ցեղային դարաւոր յատկանիշներն ու ծուլման պատճառները: Այս արժէքաւոր տեղեկութիւնները օգտակար պիտի հանդիսանան հայ կազմակերպութիւններուն, համայնքի ղեկավարներուն, ինչպէս նաեւ իւրաքանչիւր հայ անհատի:

Այս ուսումնասիրութեան արդիւնքները մաս պիտի կազմեն Անիի ``Տոքթորայի`` աւարտաճառին, որ յոյսով եմ թէ ներկայացուելէն ետք պիտի հրատարակուի:

Կը խնդրուի ձեզմէ որ պատասխանէք բոլոր հարցումներուն եւ հարցարանը վերադարձնէք ներփակեալ պահարանով: Կը փափաքիմ ձեզի տեղեկացնել թէ ձեր անունը պատահական կերպով ընտրուած է՝ որպէս զի կարելի չափով այլազան պատասխաններ մէկտեղուին: Կը վստահեցնենք ձեզի որ այս հարցումներուն տրուած պատասխանները գաղտնի պիտի պահուին:

Անի Պազալեանը եւ ես կը գնահատենք ձեր օժանդակութիւնը ի նպաստ այս կարեւոր ուսումնասիրութեան:

Ձերդ

Bernard Barber

Փրոֆ. Գէրնարտ Պարպէր

8.4. Եթէ կը նախընտրէք հայերէն լեզուով պատասխանել հարցումներուն, եւ կամ որեւէ հարցում ունիք՝ կրնաք հեռաձայնել Անիին (212 246-6215):

Columbia University in the City of New York | *New York, N.Y. 10027*

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY Fayerweather Hall

April 15, 1986

Dear Fellow Armenian,

This survey aims to fill a gap in our knowledge and understanding of men and women of Armenian descent in America today. Please help me by completing the enclosed questionnaire.

Your household is one of a number in which people are being asked to give their opinions and family histories. It was drawn in a random sample from the mailing lists of Armenian churches and organizations in the New York and New Jersey Metro area. In order that the results will truly represent the thinking of people of Armenian descent, it is important that we have about the same number of men and women participating in the study. Thus, we would like the questionnaire for your household to be completed by an adult female of Armenian descent. If none is present, then it should be completed by an adult male of Armenian descent. (In other households, adult males will be filling out the questionnaire).

The results of this study need to be compared with a sample of men and women of Armenian descent who are not involved with Armenian organizations and community affairs. Please send the name(s), address and telephone number of a relative or friend who fits this description so a copy of this questionnaire be sent to him/her. A postcard is provided for this purpose.

You may be assured of complete confidentiality. The questionnaire has an identification number for mailing purposes only. This is so that your name may be checked off the mailing list when your questionnaire is returned. Your name will never be placed on the questionnaire.

I would be happy to answer any questions you might have. Please write or call. The telephone number is (212)246-6215.

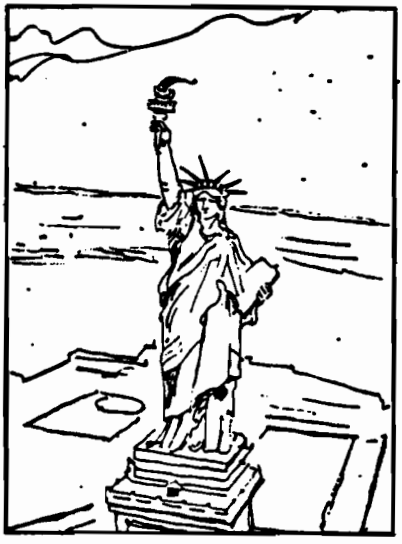
Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely,

A Bakalian

ANNY BAKALIAN

**ARMENIANS AND THEIR DESCENDANTS IN AMERICA:**



**A STUDY OF THE PATTERNS OF ETHNIC MANIFESTATION IN NEW YORK/NEW JERSEY**

Ethnic parades, festivals, and food fairs in American cities increased in popularity in the last couple of decades, suggesting a revival of ethnic identification and pride. Hardly anything has been written about the achievements (or failures) of Armenians in America.

By answering the questions in this survey you will help us understand ethnicity in America in general, and people of Armenian descent in particular.

Please answer all of the questions. If you wish to comment on any questions or qualify your answers, please use the margins or a separate sheet of paper. Your comments will be read and taken into account.

Thank you for your help.

Please return this questionnaire in enclosed envelope to:

ANNY BAKALIAN
BOX 60 FAYERWEATHER HALL
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
NEW YORK NY 10027

## PLEASE CIRCLE NUMBER OF YOUR ANSWER

Q-1 How do you think of yourself, as an: (Circle one answer)

1 ARMENIAN
2 AMERICAN-ARMENIAN
3 AMERICAN
4 ISTANBUL-ARMENIAN
5 IRANIAN-ARMENIAN
6 SOVIET-ARMENIAN
7 LEBANESE-ARMENIAN
8 OTHER (SPECIFY)_____

Q-2 How often do you eat Armenian food at home?

1 NEVER
2 A FEW TIMES A YEAR
3 A FEW TIMES A MONTH
4 ABOUT ONCE A WEEK
5 ALMOST EVERY DAY

Q-3 How many Armenian dishes can you (or your spouse) cook?

1 NONE
2 LESS THAN 5
3 BETWEEN 6 AND 12
4 BETWEEN 13 AND 24
5 MORE THAN 25

Q-4 Do you speak Armenian?

1 NOT AT ALL
2 VERY LITTLE
3 ADEQUATELY
4 WELL
5 VERY WELL

Q-5 Do you read/write Armenian?

1 NOT AT ALL
2 VERY LITTLE
3 ADEQUATELY
4 WELL
5 VERY WELL

Q-6 How often do you speak each of these languages at home? (Circle one number in each column)

| ENGLISH | ARMENIAN | OTHER (SPECIFY) _____ | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1 | 1 | NEVER |
| 2 | 2 | 2 | SELDOM |
| 3 | 3 | 3 | SOME OF THE TIME |
| 4 | 4 | 4 | MOST OF THE TIME |
| 5 | 5 | 5 | ALWAYS |

Q-7 Do you listen to the Armenian Radio Hour?

1 NEVER
2 RARELY
3 SOME OF THE TIME
4 MOST OF THE TIME
5 ALWAYS

Q-8 Do you read Armenian literature (either in Armenian or in translation)?

1 NEVER
2 RARELY
3 SOME OF THE TIME
4 MOST OF THE TIME
5 ALWAYS

Q-9 Have you ever bought any works of art (painting, sculpture, embroidery, antiques) especially because they were made by Armenians?

1 NEVER
2 RARELY
3 SOME OF THE TIME
4 MOST OF THE TIME
5 ALWAYS

Q-10 Do you receive Armenian newspapers or magazines either English or Armenian?

1 NONE
2 ONE
3 TWO TO THREE
4 FOUR TO SIX
5 MORE THAN SEVEN

Q-11 Which of the following professionals you deal with are Armenian? (Circle your answers)

1 DOCTOR
2 LAWYER
3 ACCOUNTANT
4 DENTIST
5 NONE OF THE ABOVE

Q-12 Suppose you own your own business, would you employ other Armenians?

1 NEVER
2 RARELY
3 SOME OF THE TIME
4 MOST OF THE TIME
5 ALWAYS

Q-13 Have you patronized a gas station, mechanic, grocery store, dry cleaner, jeweler, watch repair, etc. solely because they were Armenian?

1 NEVER
2 RARELY
3 SOME OF THE TIME
4 MOST OF THE TIME
5 ALWAYS

Q-14 Have you in the last year attended requiem services for April 24?

1 NO
2 YES

Q-15 Have you in the last year participated in marches, demonstrations, public ceremonies for April 24? (exclude requiems)

1 NO
2 YES

Q-16 How do you describe your feelings towards Turkey's denial of the Armenian Massacres? (You may circle more than one answer)

1 INDIFFERENCE
2 HUMILIATION
3 ARMENIANS DESERVE JUSTICE
4 ANGER, FRUSTRATION
5 OTHER (SPECIFY) _____

Q-17 Have you ever written letters to your Congressman or visited Washington to help pass a bill that will make April 24 "A Day of Remembrance of Man's Inhumanity to Man?"

1 NO
2 YES

Q-18 Which of the following public actions have you been involved in? (You may circle more than one answer)

1 GET JOBS FOR OTHER ARMENIANS
2 HELP ESTABLISH AN ARMENIAN SCHOOL
3 FURTHER ARMENIAN INTERESTS IN YOUR COMMUNITY
4 NONE OF THE ABOVE

Q-19 Do you think there is a great deal of prejudice against Armenian Americans in this country?

1 NO
2 YES

Q-20 Have you ever been discriminated against because you were an Armenian in America? Circle 1 for NO, 2 for YES for each of the following questions:

| NO | YES | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | GETTING A JOB |
| 1 | 2 | GETTING A PROMOTION |
| 1 | 2 | JOINING A CLUB |
| 1 | 2 | ADMISSION TO SCHOOL OR COLLEGE |
| 1 | 2 | BUYING/RENTING AN APARTMENT OR HOUSE |

Q-21 While you were growing up, did you and your family visit with other Armenians excluding relatives?

1 NEVER
2 RARELY
3 SOME OF THE TIME
4 MOST OF THE TIME
5 ALWAYS

Q-22 Next, think of the friends you had when you were 17 or 18. How many were Armenian?

1 NONE
2 LESS THAN HALF
3 ABOUT HALF
4 MORE THAN HALF

Q-23 Think of your three closest friends today. Please, provide the following information for each: sex, age, place of birth, religion, ethnic background, occupation, education, and social class (i.e., upper class, upper middle class, middle class, working class). How long have you known each (in years)?

| | SEX | AGE | PLACE OF BIRTH | RELIGION | ETHNICITY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| FRIEND 1 | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| FRIEND 2 | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| FRIEND 3 | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

| | OCCUPATION | EDUCATION | SOCIAL CLASS | TIME KNOWN |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| FRIEND 1 | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| FRIEND 2 | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| FRIEND 3 | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

Q-24 Bedsides your three closest friends, think of the other friends you have today. How many of them are Armenian?

1 NONE
2 LESS THAN HALF
3 ABOUT HALF
4 MORE THAN HALF

Q-25 How many of them belong to the same social class as you?

1 NONE
2 LESS THAN HALF
3 ABOUT HALF
4 MORE THAN HALF

Q-26 Now, think of the five persons you feel closest to. How many of the five are relatives of yours?

If married, how many of the five are relatives of your spouse?

Q-27 Would you (do you) send your child(ren) to an Armenian day school?

1 NO
2 YES (go to Q-29)

Q-28 If not, why? (You may circle more than one answer)

1 TOO FAR AWAY
2 EXPENSIVE
3 LOW ACADEMIC STANDARDS
4 INFERIOR SOCIAL MILIEU
5 OTHER (SPECIFY)_____

Q-29 Do you, would you send your child to an Armenian Summer camp? Why? (You may circle more than one answer)

1 NO
2 YES, TO LEARN ARMENIAN
3 TO LEARN ARMENIAN HISTORY AND CULTURE
4 TO MAKE ARMENIAN FRIENDS HIS/HER OWN AGE
5 TO HAVE A GOOD TIME
6 TO LEARN NEW SPORTS
7 OTHER (SPECIFY)_____

Q-31 Do you, would you, send your child to an Armenian Saturday school? Why? (You may circle more than one answer)

1 NO
2 YES, TO LEARN ARMENIAN LANGUAGE
3 TO LEARN ARMENIAN HISTORY AND CULTURE
5 TO MAKE ARMENIAN FRIENDS HIS/HER OWN AGE
6 OTHER (SPECIFY)_____

Q-32 What is the main reason you attend an Armenian church? (You may circle more than one answer)

1 BECAUSE I'VE ALWAYS GONE TO AN ARMENIAN CHURCH
2 TO MEET MY FRIENDS
3 FAMILY AND FRIENDS EXPECT IT
4 TO WORSHIP GOD AND PRAY
5 I ENJOY THE SINGING
6 TO MAKE ME FEEL BETTER
7 KEEPS ME IN TOUCH WITH ARMENIAN COMMUNITY
8 TEACH MY CHILDREN ABOUT ARMENIAN CHURCH AND CULTURE
9 OTHER (SPECIFY)_____

Q-33 Do you attend non-Armenian church?

1 NEVER (Go to Q-36)
2 RARELY
3 SOME OF THE TIME
4 MOST OF THE TIME
5 ALWAYS

Q-34 Please specify which non-Armenian church you go to.

Q-35 Why do you attend this non-Armenian church?

Q-36 Do you abstain from food the day you plan to take communion?

0 DO NOT TAKE COMMUNION
1 NEVER
2 RARELY
3 SOME OF THE TIME
4 MOST OF THE TIME
5 ALWAYS

Q-37 Do you fast or abstain from animal products, or other items, during Lent or Holy Week before Easter?

1 NEVER
2 RARELY
3 SOME OF THE TIME
4 MOST OF THE TIME
5 ALWAYS

Q-38 In the last year, how many (if any) activities did you attend that were sponsored by Armenian organizations? Some activities are held only once a year, others more often. Please circle number(s) for each type of activity listed below.

| | TIMES ATTENDED (IN 1985) | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ARMENIAN FESTIVAL/ONE WORLD FEST. | 0 | 1-2 | 3-5 | 6-10 | 11+ |
| DINNER DANCE (BARAHANTES) | 0 | 1-2 | 3-5 | 6-10 | 11+ |
| "KEF NIGHT" | 0 | 1-2 | 3-5 | 6-10 | 11+ |
| MUSICAL CONCERT | 0 | 1-2 | 3-5 | 6-10 | 11+ |
| FOLK DANCE | 0 | 1-2 | 3-5 | 6-10 | 11+ |
| ART EXHIBIT | 0 | 1-2 | 3-5 | 6-10 | 11+ |
| BAZAAR/BAKE SALE/RUG SALE | 0 | 1-2 | 3-5 | 6-10 | 11+ |
| APRIL 24 COMMEMORATIONS | 0 | 1-2 | 3-5 | 6-10 | 11+ |
| LECTURE/PANEL DISCUSSION | 0 | 1-2 | 3-5 | 6-10 | 11+ |
| PICNIC | 0 | 1-2 | 3-5 | 6-10 | 11+ |
| THEATRICAL EVENT | 0 | 1-2 | 3-5 | 6-10 | 11+ |
| SPORTS MATCHES | 0 | 1-2 | 3-5 | 6-10 | 11+ |
| ARMENIAN CONVENTION/WEEKEND | 0 | 1-2 | 3-5 | 6-10 | 11+ |

Q-39 How many voluntary organizations do you presently belong to? How many of these are Armenian? A list is provided below to help you remember. Please list ALL organizations you belong to of each type listed, then write the number of Armenian organizations in the second column. Write Zero (0) if you do not belong to an organization of the type listed.

| | TOTAL # OF ORGANIZATIONS | # ARMENIAN |
|---|---|---|
| COMPATRIOTIC SOCIETIES: | _____ | _____ |
| POLITICAL PARTIES: | _____ | _____ |
| CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS: | _____ | _____ |
| CULTURAL/ARTISTIC ASSOC.: | _____ | _____ |
| SPORTS ORGANIZATIONS: | _____ | _____ |
| FOLK DANCE ENSEMBLE: | _____ | _____ |
| CHOIRS: | _____ | _____ |
| SCHOLARLY ASSOCIATIONS: | _____ | _____ |
| PROFESSIONAL ASSOC.: | _____ | _____ |
| STUDENT ASSOCIATIONS: | _____ | _____ |
| CHURCH COMMITTEES: | _____ | _____ |
| OTHER (SPECIFY): | _____ | _____ |

Q-40 Have you in the last year assumed any position of responsibility in any of these organizations? Specify.

Q-41 How often do you attend activities/meetings of Armenian voluntary organizations in general?

1 NEVER
2 RARELY
3 SOME OF THE TIME
4 MOST OF THE TIME
5 ALWAYS

Q-42 How often do you attend non-Armenian voluntary organizations?

1 NEVER
2 RARELY
3 SOME OF THE TIME
4 MOST OF THE TIME
5 ALWAYS

Q-43 Please respond to the questions below by putting a number from 1 to 5 in the slot next to each statement. The numbers range from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree), as indicated in the following scale:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| STRONGLY AGREE | MILDLY AGREE | NO OPINION | MILDLY DISAGREE | STRONGLY DISAGREE |

____ It is not possible to stay Armenian without speaking Armenian.

____ Armenian "terrorism" in the last few years has soiled the good name of Armenians in the USA as a law-abiding, peace-loving people

____ When I notice an Armenian name on a shop or in the media (such as movie credits, press) I feel happy, proud.

____ Unlike American-born Armenians, some recent Armenian immigrants to America are crude, clannish.

____ I believe that sending a child to an Armenian day school will hinder his/her chances of getting into a good college and improving himself/herself in life.

____ I feel more comfortable with Armenians who are born and raised in the same city/country as me.

____ If the Armenian church does not use English in its services, the American-born youth will stop coming to church.

____ Armenian priests should preach only the Holy Scriptures in their sermons and not concern themselves with Armenian issues.

____ It is every Armenian's duty to support the Armenian national church morally and financially.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| STRONGLY AGREE | MILDLY AGREE | NO OPINION | MILDLY DISAGREE | STRONGLY DISAGREE |

____ The division of the Armenian community into various political groups, such as Hunchags, Ramgavars, Tashnags, is irrelevant in this day and age.

____ Women who join the Women's Movement are typically frustrated and unattractive people who feel they lose out by the current rules of society.

____ I attend the Armenian church closest to my home, whether or not I sympathize with Etchmiadzin or Antelias.

____ It is alright for women to work, but men will always be the basic breadwinners.

____ I would vote for an Armenian political candidate at local or national elections regardless of party affiliation.

____ You can be for your own people first and still be a good American.

____ A woman should be expected to change her name when she marries.

____ Our children should learn to speak Armenian.

____ I would support Armenian "terrorism" against Turkish military bases.

____ A woman should not expect to go to the same places or have the same freedom of action as a man.

____ A person should always consider the needs of his family as a whole more important than his own.

____ A good Armenian should marry another Armenian.

____ A person should always help his parents with the support of his younger brothers and sisters if necessary.

____ Armenians in the diaspora should eventually settle in Soviet Armenia to avoid assimilation.

____ I would be willing to live in a free Armenia.

____ If necessary, I would fight to free Armenia.

____ I believe that one day in the distant future we will be able to have a free Armenia.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| STRONGLY AGREE | MILDLY AGREE | NO OPINION | MILDLY DISAGREE | STRONGLY DISAGREE |

____ Realistically speaking, most progress so far has been made by men and we expect it to continue that lay.

____ I consider Soviet Armenia as the spiritual homeland of Armenians.

____ It is alright to change your name so that I will not be taken for an Armenian.

____ I believe that the interests of the U.S.A. are indeed furthered against the Communist block by supporting Turkey.

____ It is important for me that my children marry someone of my own ethnic background.

____ Our people should get their families to the Armenian church on Sundays, even if it is far from one's home.

____ I would rather visit with my friends than with my relatives.

____ I attend the activities that interest me in the Armenian community no matter what the political affiliation of the organization sponsoring the activity.

Q-44 Listed below are a number of ethnic/religious groups. Consider each group one at a time and indicate the closest relation you have had with each. In front of each entry please indicate your answer:

1 relative (by blood or marriage)
2 friend
3 neighbor
4 co-worker
5 acquaintance
6 no acquaintance

| | |
|---|---|
| ___ AMERICAN-ARMENIANS | ___ ISTANBUL-ARMENIANS |
| ___ SOVIET-ARMENIANS | ___ MIDDLE EAST ARMENIANS |
| ___ IRANIAN-ARMENIANS | ___ EAST EUROPEAN ARMENIANS |
| ___ POLISH | ___ ANGLO-SAXON |
| ___ ASIAN | ___ TURK |
| ___ ARAB | ___ JEWISH |
| ___ ITALIAN | ___ BLACK |
| ___ IRISH | ___ HISPANIC |
| ___ FRENCH | ___ GREEK |

Q-45 Finally, we would like to ask a few questions about yourself for statistical purposes. Are you presently:

1 EMPLOYED
2 UNEMPLOYED
3 RETIRED
4 FULL-TIME HOMEMAKER
5 STUDENT

Q-46 What is your main occupation now? (If retired, unemployed, what was your occupation when you were working?)

Q-47 Are you self-employed?

1 NO
2 YES

Q-48 What is or was the main occupation of your father?

Q-49 What is or was the main occupation of your mother?

Q-50 What is the highest grade you completed in school? (If you have a technical or professional degree please indicate)

Q-51 What city/country were you born in?
1 USA (Go to Q-54)
2 OTHER (SPECIFY)_____

Q-52 If you were not born in the USA, at what age did you come here?

Q-53 Were you or your family sponsored by ANCHA?
1 NO
2 YES

Q-54 Please indicate for each of the following: place of birth, ethnic background, religious affiliation, and (approximate) year of arrival in the USA. (Write "NA" for Not Applicable.)

| | CITY/ TOWN | ETHNICITY | RELIGION | YEAR |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 YOUR MOTHER | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 2 YOUR FATHER | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 3 YOUR MOTHER'S MOTHER | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 4 YOUR MOTHER'S FATHER | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 5 YOUR FATHER'S MOTHER | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 6 YOUR FATHER'S FATHER | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

Q-55 What is your religious affiliation?
1 ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH (LOUSAVORCHAGAN)
2 ARMENIAN PROTESTANT CHURCH
3 ARMENIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
4 OTHER (SPECIFY)_____

Q-56 What is your marital status?
1 NEVER MARRIED (PLEASE GO TO Q-69)
2 MARRIED
3 WIDOWED
4 SEPARATED
5 DIVORCED

NOTE: In answering the following questions, please consider your current spouse if you are remarried. If widowed, separated, divorced, consider your previous spouse.

Q-57 How long have you been married?

Q-58 What is (or was) your spouse's main occupation?

Q-59 What is or was the main occupation of your spouse's father?

Q-60 What was the highest grade your spouse completed in school?

Q-61 Does (did) your spouse speak Armenian?
1 NO
2 YES

Q-62 Does (did) your spouse read/write Armenian?
1 NO
2 YES

Q-63 Where was your spouse born?
1 USA (Go to Q-65)
2 OTHER (SPECIFY)_____

Q-64 If he/she was not born in the USA, at what age did your spouse come here?

Q-65 What is your spouse's religious affiliation?
1 ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH (LOUSAVORCHAGAN)
2 ARMENIAN PROTESTANT CHURCH
3 ARMENIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
4 OTHER (SPECIFY)_____

Q-66 Was your spouse raised in this denomination?
1 NO, THEN WHAT DENOMINATION WAS YOUR SPOUSE RAISED IN? (SPECIFY)_____
2 YES

Q-67 What is the ethnic background of your spouse's father?
1 ARMENIAN
2 OTHER (SPECIFY)_____

Q-68 What is the ethnic background of your spouse's mother?
1 ARMENIAN
2 OTHER (SPECIFY)_____

Q-69 Do you consider yourself a:
1 DEMOCRAT
2 REPUBLICAN
3 INDEPENDENT
4 OTHER (SPECIFY)_____

Q-70 Did you vote in the 1984 Presidential elections?
1 NO
2 YES
3 CAN'T VOTE

Q-71 Have you ever done work for one of the major political parties or candidates?

For whom did you work?

What did you do?

Q-72 Please list all persons who presently live in your household (include unmarried children at school). Please indicate their relation to you, age, and marital status.

| RELATION | AGE | MARITAL STATUS |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Q-73 In the last two weeks, how many times did you telephone or see the following people? (Write 0, 1, 2, 3, etc., in the appropriate column and indicate where each person lives [city or state]. If dead or do not have any, write "NA"/Not applicable.)

| | PHONED | SEEN | CITY/STATE |
|---|---|---|---|
| MOTHER/FATHER: | | | |
| SISTER/BROTHER: | | | |
| IN-LAWS: | | | |
| GRANDPARENTS: | | | |
| AUNT/UNCLE: | | | |
| COUSIN(S): | | | |
| NEPHEW/NIECE: | | | |
| CHILDREN: | | | |

Q-74 Are you officially a member of an Armenian Political party?

1 NO
2 ARMENIAN ASSEMBLY
3 HUNCHAGIAN
4 RAMGAVAR
5 TASHNGAGZOUTUN
6 OTHER (SPECIFY)_____

Q-75 Do you sympathize with any of the following Armenian political divisions?

1 HUNCHAGIAN
2 RAMGAVAR
3 TASHNAGZOUTUN
4 NEUTRAL (CHEZOK)
5 INDIFFERENT
6 OTHER (SPECIFY)_____

Q-76 Which social class do you belong to?

1 WORKING CLASS
2 MIDDLE CLASS
3 UPPER MIDDLE CLASS
4 UPPER CLASS

Q-77 Into which of the following categories does your total annual family income from all sources (before taxes) fall? Include only yours and your spouse's; do not include earnings from any other person in your household.

1 0-14,999
2 15,000-19,999
3 20,000-24,999
4 25,000-29,999
5 30,000-34,999
6 40,000-44,999
7 45,000-49,999
8 50,000-54,999
9 55,000-59,999
10 60,000-64,999
11 65,000-69,999
12 70,000-79,999
13 80,000-89,999
14 90,000-99,999
15 100,000+

Q-78 How old are you?

Q-79 Please indicate your sex:

1 MALE
2 FEMALE

Is there anything else you would like to share with me? In the space provided below, I invite you to write down briefly the story of your Armenian family's journey from the Old World to America. From where did you or your ancestors come? When and how? Who were they? What did they do for a living in the Old World and in America?

Also, any comments you wish to make that you think may help our understanding of Armenians in America will be appreciated, either here or in a separate letter.

Your contribution to this effort is very greatly appreciated. However, we hope that you can be of further assistance to us. We are trying to generate a sample of persons who have an Armenian parent or grandparent yet are not actively involved in the Armenian community of New York/New Jersey. If you have a close relative(s) or friend(s) who fits this description, please write his/her name, address and telephone number on the back of this card. You do not need to mention your name on this card. You may mail this card to our address separately or enclose it with your completed questionnaire. We assure you that we will be as confidential with these names as we will with yours.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

ANNY BAKALIAN

April 29, 1986

Two weeks ago a questionnaire about Armenians in America was mailed to you. Your name was drawn in a random sample of Armenian households in the New York/New Jersey Metro Area.

If you have already completed and returned it to us, please accept our sincere thanks. If not, please do so today. Because it has been sent to only a small, but representative sample of NY/NJ Armenian residents, it is extremely important that yours also be included in the study if the results are to accurately represent people of Armenian descent in this area.

If by some chance you did not receive the questionnaire, or it got misplaced, please call me right now (212-246-6215) and I will get another one in the mail to you today.

Sincerely,

## SURVEY OF ARMENIANS BEING CONDUCTED IN NY/NJ METRO AREA

Anny Bakalian, a Ph.D. candidate in sociology at Columbia University, is currently conducting a survey of men and women of Armenian descent in the New York/New Jersey Metropolitan area. This study aims to fill a very conspicuous gap in our knowledge and understanding of Armenians in the USA. While numerous books and articles have been written about other ethnic groups in America, Armenians have remained a "hidden minority."

A sample of over a thousand Armenian households was selected randomly from lists of ALL types of Armenian churches and organizations in the metro area. This scientific technique is essential for ensuring unbiased results. Similarly, in order for the findings to reflect reality, it is essential that all those people who were selected and receive the questionnaire in the mail complete it and return it to Anny Bakalian. These results will be compared with a sample of men and women of Armenian descent who are not actively involved in Armenian community life at present.

The results of this research project will appear initially as Anny Bakalian's doctoral dissertation entitled "Armenians and Their Descendants in America; A Study of the Patterns of Ethnic Manifestation in New York/New Jersey." And it is hoped it will be published shortly thereafter. Columbia professors Bernard Barber, Allen Barton, and Viviana Zelizer are sponsoring this project. The information gathered from this study should be useful specifically to Armenian organizations, community leaders, and citizens in planning policies and programs that will better serve the needs of the Armenian people in this area.

We urge the Armenian public to help Anny Bakalian carry forward this important and noteworthy project. For further information, please contact Anny Bakalian at Box 60, Fayerweather Hall, Columbia University, New York, NY 10027; tel: (212) 246-6215.

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