

CONSTRUCTION OF ARMENIAN IDENTITY IN İSTANBUL:
THE CASE OF YEŞİLKÖY

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ABSTRACT

CONSTRUCTION OF ARMENIAN IDENTITY IN ISTANBUL: THE CASE OF YEŞİLKÖY

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The aim of this thesis is to analyze Armenian ethnic identity construction, the dynamics influencing this process, and varying boundaries of this identity in Yeşilköy, which is one of the regions of Istanbul where Armenians prefer to live. The primordial as well as constructed aspects of Armenian identity in Turkey and the influence of objective and subjective definitions of Armenian collective identity constitutes the main themes of this thesis. From that perspective, homeland, history, myths, collective remembering, religion, language, rituals, the sense of being a member of a minority group, and perception of citizenship play a crucial role. Besides, relationalism, interaction with others, daily life practices, and relations with the nation-state appear as the other crucial elements of this identity construction process. Armenian identity in Turkey is multi-layered, situational and fluid. Together with the elements which provide the rigidity of identity such as religion, there are other loyalties such as ethnicity, traditions and language which give rise to plural and flexible identities. Armenian communities outside the national boundaries also serve for the self-positioning of the Armenians in Turkey.

Keywords: Armenians of Turkey, Armenian identity, identity construction, minorities.

ÖZ

İSTANBUL'DA ERMENİ KİMLİĞİNİN İNŞAASI: YEŞİLKÖY ÖRNEĞİ

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Bu çalışmada, İstanbul'da Ermenilerin en yoğun olarak yaşadığı bölgelerden biri olan Yeşilköy'deki Ermenilerin etnik kimlik oluşumu, etnik kimliğin üretiminde etkili olan dinamikler ve bu kimliğin değişken sınırları araştırılmıştır. Bu tezin temel sorunsalını Türkiye'deki Ermeni kimliğinin hangi boyutları ile ilksel, hangi boyutları ile yapılanmış olduğu ve öznel ve nesnel tanımlamaların kolektif bir kimlik olan Ermeni kimliği üzerindeki etkileri oluşturmaktadır. Bu çerçevede anavatan, tarihsel geçmiş, mitler, kolektif bellek, dil, din, karma evlilik, törenler ve azınlık ve vatandaşlık algısı önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Bunun yanı sıra, ilişkisellik, diğer gruplarla etkileşim, gündelik hayat ve ulus devlete olan ilişkiler de kimlik oluşumunun önemli dinamiklerini oluşturmaktadır. Türkiye'deki Ermeni kimliği çok katmanlı, durumsal ve akışkan bir kimliktir. Bu kimliğin sürekliliğini sağlayan din gibi bazı faktörlerin yanı sıra, çeşitliliğini sağlayan gelenek, etnisite, dil gibi öncelikli aidiyet kategorileri de bulunmaktadır. Ayrıca, Ermeniliğin ulusal sınırlar dışındaki katmanları da Türkiye Ermenilerinin kendilerini konumlandırmalarında ve kimliklerinin oluşumunda etkilidir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Türkiyeli Ermeniler, Ermeni kimliği, etnik kimlik, kimlik oluşumu, azınlıklar

To my father, I miss so much ...

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The end of cold war, collapse of communism, and the globalization process increased the transnational flow of people, information and goods, which caused the replacement of the insecure environment of the cold war period surrounded by ideologies with the one surrounded by identities. Identity emerged as *raison d'être*, as a source of legitimacy for the existence of people obliged to survive together in a global world. Demand of being recognized and protected, claiming identity rights, and emerging clashes for obtaining homelands are some of the outcomes of the raising consciousness about identities. Thus, all of these global developments brought the issue of identity into light and increased the visibility of ethnic, religious, gender, and racial identities in academic as well as political areas.

Among these identities, ethnic identity, which was usually thought to be disappeared by the modernization period, became one of the basic notions debated in various academic disciplines. These developing debates brought about out new concepts such as social boundaries, collective memories, and life histories which replaced the existing notions of nation-state systems. Although the individual efficiency of the theoretical debates to interpret recent

developments remains insufficient, they complemented a kind of illustrating framework. The identity theories are divided into three basic camps and a number of alternative perspectives. First branch, the primordialist approach, accepts ethnic identity as a primordial, given, coercive, and thus, as the deepest element of human identity. Blood ties, race, territory, customs, religion have an overpowering impact on individuals according to primordialism. However, with internal and external movements of migration, mixed- marriages, and wars, the continuity of these ethnic ties became hard to persist. The second approach, instrumentalism, deals with these changing conditions by delivering a place to human choice and interest. Shifting, hidden, situational, and constructed ethnicities are used to reach political, economic, and social resources. This perspective illustrates today's situation of migrants, minorities, and diasporas. The socially constructed nature of ethnicity that was emphasized by instrumentalist approaches are used and reformed by alternative theories of ethnicity. Armstrong's Smith's ethno-symbolism and Barth's transactionalism are leading ones which constitute a synthesis of primordialist and instrumentalist approaches.

First, ethno- symbolism opens up the way for a broader analysis. On the one hand, it attributes a fundamental role on ethnic past, symbols, myths, territory, cultural elements, and common beliefs for the existence of an ethnic group. On the other hand, it does not deny the change, disappearance and re-emergence of ethnic identities. Smith's theory analyses the link between past ethnic cores and with today's nations, developments, persistence and changes in ethnic identities. The issue of persistence of ethnic identity is also emphasized by Barth's theory of social boundaries. By taking into account a

relational ethnic identification process based on self–ascription and ascription by others, Barth emphasized differences among the groups during that process. Depending on that boundaries are described as milieus of interaction which serve to the persistence of ethnic identities by Barth (1969). Movement across boundaries and changes in the cultural stuff within the boundaries describe to some extent a dynamic process. This claim on construction and maintenance, permanence of boundaries, and the movement of cultural stuff give meaning to the situation in multi-cultural regions around the world. The term boundaries are used by many theoreticians. However Cohen’s contribution to the theory of boundaries complements Barth’s arguments by emphasizing the variability of boundaries and symbolization of “cultural stuff” that boundaries enclosed. As opposed to Barth, Cohen focused on similarities within the boundaries and construction and reconstruction of similarities by means of symbols, shared rituals. On the one hand, reformation and maintenance of community is depending on a belief of commonness created by these symbolic practices. On the other hand, that does not indicate a sense of unity on meanings attributed to these symbols according to Cohen. By taking into account historical and political factors, it is not wrong to claim that, using a unique approach will be insufficient to analyze today’s development on identity issues as in the case of Turkey.

In the newly emerging picture full of fluctuating, fluid, and mobile identities in Turkey, supported with the argument that the Turkish nation-state was build on the multicultural legacy of the Ottoman Empire, a fertile ground for ethnic revival came into being. Thus, the reflections of this global inclination were seen in the political as well as legal and social fields in

Turkey. Kurdish nationalism, identity claims of minority groups, and the increasing nationalist discourses of the politicians and nationalists tells much about the mutual reconstruction of ethnicity and nationalism as mentioned above. Despite the clashes and the insecure climate in the country, a re-evaluation on the issue of ethnic identity in Turkey had been initiated by global necessities and the process of Turkey's European Union membership. Amelioration in rights and opportunities of minority groups is one of the visible progresses in public. Before deciding on the topic of my research, I was curious that how in such a rapidly changing and, at the same time, a complex social and political atmosphere the identity of a minority group that is the Armenians with its 70,000 population, could establish, maintain and transfer their identity.

The aim of this study is to explore the zones of the Armenian identity in Yeşilköy, in one of the districts of İstanbul, where Armenians are mostly concentrated. Within this context, the impact of their historical and daily life experiences and communal practices on their identity construction and identity preservation will be analyzed. Moreover, their integration versus self-defense mechanisms used during these processes will also be discussed. To explore these zones of identity, the way in which the Turkish Armenians perceive themselves and their communities, their past and present roles in the Turkish society and their relationship with the Turks, Armenians and other ethnic communities in Turkey will also be analyzed.

One of the main assumptions of this thesis is that ethnic identities are socially constructed and are relational. Eriksen argues that, ethnic dimension of

identity is negotiated. The significance, over or under-communication of ethnic identities, depends on the encounter with significant others' identities and situational choices as well (Eriksen, 2002: 32).

At that point, the role of ethno-religiosity which occupies an important position in Armenian identity will be dealt with in this study. It is debatable whether the co-existence of ethnicity and religion is hierarchical or situational or both. In this study, such relation of Armenian ethnic identity with Christianity which is a crucial marker of distinctiveness will be elaborated by means of mutual contacts among the groups. These groups include the Turks, Jews, Greeks, Assyrians within the national borders, and diaspora Armenians and Armenians of Armenia who will be positioned at the center of the analysis. The different us and them groups as activated in various situations and encounters as Eriksen mentions will be elaborated during the study (Eriksen, 2002: 26).

Depending on that, the political aspect of interethnic relations will also be taken into account. Asymmetrical opportunities regarding access to political power and economic resources as worded by Eriksen (2002: 29) will be dealt together with the political and historical conditions under which the Armenian identity in Turkey was and still is being constructed.

However, these fluid aspects of Armenian identity mentioned above seems not sufficient to explain the survival of ethnic bonds. In the study, religion, language, traditions, and perception of homeland together with myths and collective memories are assumed to establish a sense of continuity with the past and provide the maintenance of ethnic bounds. These markers of

distinctiveness will be taken as the basic concepts of the analysis and will be dealt with in the section where the fieldwork data is analyzed.

Thus, the study aims to elaborate the variables and external factors shaping Armenian identity. The question from which aspects Armenian identity is constructed and from which aspects it holds primordial characteristics will be dealt with. Transmission of historical events and their impact on Armenian identity as well as its fixed and fluid aspects will also be examined in this study. Despite of the fact that some current events are included in the analysis, in general, the historical scope of the study is limited to the period before the 1980s. The reason behind this is the current shifts in the political structure in Turkey which may have had influenced the respondents' perceptions and expression of feelings. The easiness to talk about past events and the assumed apolitical profile of the respondents due to the generation which they belonged drives the researcher to prepare the questions to be asked accordingly.

Within the study, evidence and interdisciplinary theoretical perspectives will be blended in order to draw a clear-cut framework for the self-perception of Armenian identity of the Armenians in Turkey. The study consists of five main parts. In chapter Two, a general overview of Armenian history in Turkey will be introduced to illuminate the historical and social continuities and/or interruptions which had an impact on Armenian identity. A set of diverse theoretical understandings will be revised in Chapter Three. Chapter Four focuses on the analysis of the field research composed of twenty four in-depth

interviews conducted in Yeşilköy, one of the mostly populated locations by the Armenian community in İstanbul. Yeşiköy was chosen as a field because of the intensity of the Armenian population in the region and also because it is the place where the researcher lives since she was born. It was assumed that such familiarity to the region and community may constitute a facilitating factor in establishing the web of respondents and to eliminate the disadvantage of being an outsider to the community.

Bakırköy, where Yeşilköy is administratively bounded, was one of the oldest settling areas in İstanbul. It was an important location called as Hebdomon in Byzantium times, and Makriköy in Ottoman times. The settlement of the Turks in the region occurred in the 15th century. Its district, Yeşilköy (Ayastefanos), a little Greek fishing village, was given as a gift to an Armenian family from Amira class, Dadyan family, by the Sultan. In the 19th and early 20th century, Armenians, Greeks, and Levantine and Muslim communities were its inhabitants. Yeşilköy witnessed many historical events: 1203 Crusade, Ayastefanos Treaty, and the exile of 2nd Abdülhamit. An Armenian Apostolic Church named Surp Istepanos Armenian Church was established in the village with the contributions of the Dadyan family in the 19th century. After its establishment, two other churches were established (San Stefano Latin- Catholic Church and Stefano Orthodox Church) in the region (Tuna, 2004). Starting towards the end of the 20th century, almost all Levantines and Greeks migrated from Yeşilköy and the number of Armenians decreased as well. However, a considerable numbers of Armenians, Assyrians and Turks today live together in the region. From that perspective, it may be

claimed that a tradition of co-existence of different ethnic groups still continues to exist in the region.

Armenian Church with its foundation and school founded after the Lausanne Treaty is an important channel for the communal life of the Armenians in Yeşilköy. Also, another important place for Armenians in the village is the Aya Potini holy spring which is still a frequently visited place for worship by the Armenians. According to the data obtained from the Patriarchate by Gülüm Şener, today there are 10,000 Armenians living in Yeşilköy. Also, 240 students are studying in the Yeşilköy Armenian School in 2007 (Kentel, Özdoğan, Üstel, Karakaşlı, 2009: 240, 350). The socio-economic position of Yeşilköy's Armenians is relatively higher than the Armenians living in other regions such Kurtuluş, Feriköy, Taksim, Kumkapı and Bakırköy. However, as a result of social opportunities, socio-economic position does not constitute an obstacle for maintaining communal bonds. Also, it should be noted that, despite their relatively high economic and social status, it seems like their social status rather than their economic status plays a bigger role in their relations with the broader Armenian community. Thus, emphasis will be on social status rather than on economic class. It is important to note that those Armenians who migrated to İstanbul first settled to Kumkapı than to Feriköy, Kurtuluş or Bakırköy and then to Yeşilköy as they move upward in the socio-economic scale.

During the field research, in-depth interviews with open-ended questions were carried out as a method of data gathering. Other than in-depth interviews, document analysis and participant observation (funeral, community

choir concert, community school festival, and foundation award ceremony) were part of the methodology of this research.

The sample of the study was organized by snowball technique including respondents from different generations, from different occupational groups, and from different socio-economic backgrounds. Thus, in the sampling, inter-generational, socio-economic and gender variables were taken into account. The snowball technique was applied by means of researcher's own connections (relatives, shopkeepers known from the field) and through their recommendations. The first interview was conducted with a neighbor of the researcher (Respondent M) which initiated the snowball technique.

There were fourteen women and ten men between the ages of twenty five and seventy who were interviewed. These included two ecclesiastics, five self-employed (a dentist, pharmacy, and a real estate agent), one foundation and newspaper secretary, three teachers, five craftsmen, one foundation director, and six non-working women from Yeşilköy. One of the main aims of this study is to elaborate on the transmission of cultural features and past historical events which are the basic markers of any ethnic identity. For this purpose the middle aged and older people were selected as the respondents of this study since the intergenerational transmission of memories, myths and/or sufferings from older people to now middle aged generation better explains the role a well-remembered past plays in shaping the multi-layered borders of the Armenians community in Yeşilköy.

The interviews were conducted between May 2010 and November 2010. The length of the interviews varied between 30 minutes and 2.5 hours

depending on the respondent's willingness to discuss his or her views. The interviews were conducted mostly in the houses of the respondents or at their work places.

There were some strengths as well as limitations which the author had to deal with while conducting the field research. First, some of the people who were asked to participate in an interview refused, arguing that the topic was too sensitive. Moreover, some of the respondents changed their minds after the interview ended and demanded that their responses should not be used as a source material for this study. Some of them did not want to respond to some of the questions or they only responded from the point of view of a foundation or an institution because of their position in that foundation or institution.

In recent years the number of research about minority issues and identities, especially about the Armenians in Turkey has increased. This is also related to the general affinity in the academia towards identity issues in general and towards Turkey's integration with the EU in particular. Besides, with the assassination of Hrant Dink, attacks on the religious leaders of non-Muslim communities, and the fragile situation of non-Muslim groups also came under academic notice.

In this process, along with the biographical works including the memoirs of Armenians such as of Feride Çetin's "Anneannem" (My Grandmother), Ayşegül Altınay and Feride Çetin's "Torunlarım" (My Grandchildren), historical studies about the 1915 events, Capital Levy, events of 6- 7 September as well as works on the legal matters such as Baskın Oran

and Naz Çavusođlu's books, and especially many field research including personal histories stand in the forefront. Studies conducted by the Turkish Historical Society (Türk Tarih Kurumu) History Foundation of Turkey (Türk Tarih Vakfı), and The Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (Türkiye Ekonomik ve Sosyal Etütler Vakfı) can also be given as other examples.

The complexity of the political conjecture in terms of the simultaneous existence of attacks on some non-Muslim public figures and the amelioration of legal rights and liberties is puzzling and it continues to increase the academic interests about identity issues in Turkey. From that point, this research is also another local attempt to explore the formation and reformation of Armenian ethnic identity in Turkey through the perceptions of the members of the Armenian community.

In the following part, the historical background of Armenians and the political process in which Armenian identity evolves will be elaborated.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK

Elias in his book entitled “The Germans: Power struggles and development of habitus in the nineteenth centuries” emphasizes the role of past events on present. He claims that the roots of our current behaviors are buried in the past, in centuries ago. The impact of crucial social events can only be seen in 100 years as Elias claims (1996). This claim is also applicable for Armenian identity in Turkey. To understand Armenian identity in Turkey, it is necessary to establish a bridge between the past and the present and evaluate it accordingly. Thus, now a short overview of the Armenian history will be done.

2.1. Armenian community; historical roots

The Armenian community which is one of the oldest communities in Asia Minor has a history going back to the 600 BC. It mostly consists of establishing kingdoms, being in warfare against big empires and surviving under the reign of these empires (Urartian, Persian, Byzantium). According to Aslan that dependency had an impact on the loyalties of Armenians. In this context, he claims that Armenians are bound to each other culturally rather than politically. Their sense of belongingness to a homeland is regional so they are deeply attached to the locality they lived in (Aslan in Sezgin, 2005: 21).

This issue will also be discussed further in first part of chapter four while dealing with the issue of homeland.

Nisan claims that “the cultural traits of Armenians were historically not unique “(1991: 135). Their language is rooted in Indo-European branch. They did not have a proper alphabet for a long time. Their religious affiliation, of the Zoroastrianism, attaching them historically to Persia (Nisan: 1991). Depending on that, the most important turning point in Armenian history and identity was the collective adoption of Christianity by the kingdom of Armenia as their national religion in 301 B:C. (Nisan, 1991: 135), the complete separation with the Constantinople Church and establishment of the Armenian Apostolic Church in 506 B:C. (Nisan, 1991: 135). Leon Arpee argues that the most important element which makes them Armenian and which differentiates and preserves them is Christianity (Arpe in Sezgin: 2005, 23). This distinctiveness of being the “chosen people” as labeled by Smith (2003), serves to sustain the Armenian community over the ages, despite being dispersed through the world. According to Smith chosenness is directly related with distancing itself apart from profane. Sacred elements in other words having a proper relation with divine, constitute the basis of the idea of being “chosen people”. “Persons or groups who are chosen are marked off from the multitude, often at first by a divine promise, to enable them to obey and perform God’s will” Smith mentions (Smith, 2003: 48). Myths such as Noah's Arc contributed to that mission in which community position himself as instruments of God’s plan, accomplishing his will in the world which leads to their salvation (Smith, 2003). This idea of being chosen has various implications on Armenian identity.

Another important moment for Armenian identity was the invention of a proper Armenian alphabet by cleric Mesrop Mashots in the early fifth century (Smith, 2003: 67). It basically appeared out of a religious necessity, to translate the Bible in Armenian (Kocaoğlu, 2001: 106). This development protected Armenian identity from possible outside influences.

After the establishment of Ottoman Empire, by means of the features mentioned above and by means of millet system applied to regulate relations with non-Muslim groups, Armenian identity is maintained. In the following section, a general framework of Armenian history within the Ottoman Empire will be drawn.

2.2. Armenians in the Ottoman Empire

Berkes argue Ottoman Empire was far from being a Turkish state. He names Ottoman Empire as “a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and a multi-lingual Islamic Empire” which based its socio-political, economic and judicial system on rules of Islamic law (1998:14). It was because of this basic characteristic that although the ethno-lingual differentiation was precise and recognized in the Ottoman world, various religious beliefs signified the prime source of identity in the Ottoman society. In other words, religion was a determining factor both before the state authorities and in the eyes of the general public.

Armenians as one of the non-Muslim minorities in the Ottoman society were part of the Ottoman *Millet* system (in Arabic; Islamic community). Millet system as a type of social religiously segmented organization was described by Kymlicka as “one of the forms of religious tolerations”, a “precedent model of for the minority rights” (Kymlicka, 1995:156). He claims that Ottoman millet

system gave jurisdictional, welfare and taxation authority, worshiping liberties to non-Muslim communities and it opens some of the spheres of autonomy such as social security system, health system, judiciary system, and educational system for them. To put it differently, it gave some privileges to the non-Muslim minorities to realize their communal life freely and to protect and promote their ethno-cultural characteristics. Besides, millet system put attributed the *zimmi* status (the one under the protectorate of another) to non-Muslims defined by the Islamic Law. With that status, as long as members of non-Muslim communities accept the authority of Islam, pay Haraç and Cizye taxes (specific taxes for non-Muslims) were paid, and stay loyal to the state, life, goods and honor had been taken under guarantee in the state in turn (Belge in Okutan, 2004: 31-32) However, being given such autonomies and immunities did not mean equality for the non-Muslim groups of the Ottoman Empire. Different treatments in the affairs of public employment, military services and public life were applied. For example, wearing non-luxury clothes different from the ones the Muslim's wore, living in houses lower than Muslims houses, not being allowed to walk on pavements, riding horses, bearing arms, and marrying Muslim women were some of the restrictions separating the Muslims from the non-Muslims. Wearing bath clog in baths, constructing new worship places and churches were also restricted. Besides, as mentioned above, all non-Muslim men had to pay the *cizye* tax as a duty in place of doing military services, and their testimonies were not accepted in courts. Eryılmaz, interprets the intent of these practices as a continuous reminding to the non-Muslim peoples of the Ottoman Empire their lower status (Eryılmaz, 1990). Similarly Davidson has difficulty to establish a link

between semi autonomy of the Christian millet's and a total equality among the groups. He claims that,

The Muslim millet was dominant. This did not lead to any systematic persecution of Christians by Muslims, nor to any systematic oppression of Christians by the Ottoman government... Despite, all this it was still incontestable that Christians were looked down upon as second-class citizens both by the Muslim public and by the government (Davison in Şeker, 2005: 60).

Such autonomy on the one hand and a limited number of common practices in daily life on the other created a kind of cultural isolation which prevented the total integrity of these groups into the Ottoman society. Depending on that and as İnalçık argues, “The Ottoman identity was based on political and legal status, rather than on cultural homogeneity – despite cultural interaction between religious and ethnic groups” (İnalçık in Komşuoğlu, 2009: 329). However, Karal points out that the Armenians were the community which adopted the Turkish culture most among other non-Muslim *millet*s. Because of the fact that they did not constitute the majority in places where they lived due to the divisions of sects, they mostly spoke Turkish and thus, they are mostly integrated (Karal in Okutan, 2004: 33). Religious leadership plays an important role in this integration. After the Armenians acquired the *millet* status in 1453, an Armenian Apostolic Patriarch was established in 1461 in İstanbul as separate from the Catholicate in Sis (situated in Kilikya) and from the patriarchates in Jerusalem. Soon after, all other non-minority groups were bounded to the Armenian Apostolic patriarchate. The patriarch's statue was like a community leader in the eyes of the community and the state. Like its current position in Turkey, he worked like a mediator and transmitter of messages between the community and the political authorities.

After these religious arrangements, the Armenian community obtained a separate place and opportunities to preserve its cultural, religious and ethnic traits. Such development triggered the migration of many Armenians from Crimea, Western Anatolia, Iran and Caucasus to İstanbul from the 15th to 18th century. It should be mentioned that the Armenians had divergent classes within the Armenian community in the Ottoman Empire. As one of the non-Muslim *millets*, they were not allowed to take part in public employment until the 19th century when they developed their skills in economic areas. The Amira class, which was constituted by the economically and socially wealthy groups of the Armenian population, was mostly formed by rich artisans, traders, money lenders, and industrialists. For instance, the Dadian family mentioned in the Introduction, was one of them who established a gunpowder paper factory and a navy yard (Kentel, Üstel, Özdoğan, Karakaşlı, 2009: 119). Peasants in Anatolia were another group in Armenian community who became the central actor for the nationalist revival of within the Armenian community. In many cases, religious man, amira class and peasant conflict with each other. However, the power relationship of the Amira class with the Armenian religious leaders and peasants were intense until the reformation period of Ottoman Empire and especially after the relocation of the Armenians in 1915 which was central for the unification of the Armenian community.

After the end of the 18th century, with the newly emerging ideas of equality, freedom, nationalism and with the impact of western powers, the Ottoman elite had to re-examine the efficiency of the Ottoman political, social and judicial system and its power. This was necessary to hold the whole communities together in the age of rising nationalism. Thus, the necessity to

open the boundaries of the religious “compartments” of religious groups (Dink, 2008; Çağaptay, 2010) and to integrate the whole society under, common Ottoman identity, (the ideology of Ottomanism) emerged. Ottomanism which generate a supra- religious Ottoman identity paved the way to the discussion of new concepts such as parliamentary system, constitutional monarchy, and representation.

The period of 2nd Mahmut was the beginning of new applications for the Ottoman non-Muslim communities. He abolished the obligation of non-Muslims to wear different clothes different than the Muslim population. Bebiroğlu quotes one of 2nd Mahmut’s claims, “I distinguish my Christian subjects only in the Church, my Jewish subjects only in the synagogue and my Muslim subjects only in the Mosque. There is no difference among them. My affection and justice towards them is similar, all are my children.” He also regulated the sectarian divisions between the Apostolic and Catholic Armenians and accepted the Catholic Armenians as separate *millet* (Bebiroğlu, 2008: 19).

The reformist project of *İttihad-i Anasır* gained momentum with the 1839 Tanzimat Edict (Gülhane Hattı Hümayun). Bozkurt mentions that with this edit, the equality principle of personal rights, penal law and tax law for all subjects from different religions was accepted as a positive legal principle (Bozkurt in Okutan, 2004: 38). *Islahat Edit*, which included more articles about the non-Muslim communities and their organizations gave the non-Muslim communities rights to establish secular parliaments, to repair their worship places without permission, to send their children to all kinds of schools including the military ones, to be admitted in public services, and to open their

own schools with the condition that they would be controlled by the state (Okutan, 2004: 39-40). After these regulations, many members of the Armenian community gained a privileged position in the eyes of the Ottoman elite and began to occupy crucial administrative positions in Ottoman public life.

Armenian legal and judicial reforms were structured within this atmosphere of freedom summarized above. Berkes considers this process admirable. He argues that these legal improvements of the Armenian community served as a model for the preparation of the Ottoman constitution, *Kanun-i Esasi* (The Basic Law), the parliamentary system and it also became a point of departure for Armenian nationalism (Berkes, 1998: 228). Thus, the first parliament of the Armenian community was established in 1847 and the first institutional document named *Nizamname-i Millet-i Ermeniyân* (1869) was approved by sultan 1st Abdülaziz in 1860. This document limited the authority of religious leaders and enlarged the authority of civil representatives in the parliament who spoke in the name of the community. Besides, that document paved the way to the cultural revival of the Armenian community since it ended with the establishment of new cultural institutions and opening of new schools. At the end of the 1850s, the number of Armenian schools was over forty. Moreover, many newspapers started to be published among the non-Muslim groups of the Ottoman society. For instance, *Hayastan* (the homeland of Armenians), the Armenian newspaper in İstanbul, became an important channel for the development of Armenian nationalism (Libardian in Göl, 2005: 128). The number of Armenian newspapers at the end of the *Tanzimat* (Regulation) period was almost twenty. As Anderson discusses (2002), printing

in native languages was important for the revival of ethnic consciousness as was the case for the Armenian community. The law named *Tabiyet-i Osmaniye Kanunnamesi* for the first time regulated the criteria for Ottoman citizenship. According to this law, there were no differences between the various Ottoman *millets* since it emphasized Ottoman identity as a legal political identity (Gencer in Pultar, 2009: 71). Kanun-i Esasi promulgated in 1876 was the most inclusive part of the process of building an Ottoman nation; it attempted to dissolve the ethno-religious and legal compartmentalization among subjects.

This new understanding which was developed by the Ottoman elite had a significant impact on the Armenian community who joined these reforms with eagerness. However, since the structural basis of these reforms was not properly established, the political conjuncture oriented by the wave of nationalism made it difficult to maintain a multi-national empire. As noted by Davison,

The political modernization project became unsuccessful in uniting all ethnic groups under Ottomanism. Instead, Christian communities moved out of millet consciousness directly into a national consciousness without ever accepting Ottoman citizenship (Davidson in Soner, 2009 366).

In the last period of dissolution process of the Ottoman Empire (especially after 1913) the political structure changed direction. The ideological basis and policies of the Committee of Union Progress (CUP) and the awakening of national consciousness of the Armenians could not coexist. These two tendencies were mutually exclusive. While the Armenian Taşnak and Hınçak organizations who were collaborating with Russia were organizing rebellions against the government, the CUP regime responded to these attempts with force.

Also, in Anatolia, nationalisms clashes; Turkish and Armenian ones were sharpening each other. Keyder claims that especially Muslim migrants who had been maltreated by the Christians in their homeland were holding a nationalist position (Keyder in Barkey and Hagen, 2007: 36).

These developments and Armenian claims from the Ottoman government leads to the change of position of Armenians, Göl labels as “from being one of the loyal *millets* in the Ottoman society to the others in Ottoman Turkish history” (Göl, 2005: 131). The relocation of the Armenian population living in eastern Anatolia to the Ottoman district of Damascus in 1915 refreshed the insecure political atmosphere of the empire. The number of Armenians decreased enormously after the World War 1 and during the following years. Based on the first census made after the establishment of republic in 1927, the percentage of Armenians in the Ottoman society decreased from million seven percent to five per thousand after 1914 (Kentel, Üstel, Özdoğan, Karakaşlı, 2009:156).

To summarize, the destruction of the Ottoman *millet* system and the process of building the Turkish nation- state reshaped the identity of the Turkish Armenian community. From being *millet-i sadıka* and citizens of the Ottoman nation, they were left out of the citizenship status in the new Turkish republic since they were considered as one of the causes of the dissolution of the Empire. As Soner claims, they lost their naivety in the eyes of the Turkish statesmen and it was this distrust and suspicion which constrained the issues of minority rights and citizenship status of the minorities in the republican period (Soner in Keyman, İçduygu, 2009: 376).

2.3. Armenians in the Republican Period

Establishment of a new nation-state brought about a difficult integration process with the multicultural heritage of the Ottoman Empire. Early Republican period signaled the continuation of identity claims both by the Muslim and non Muslim communities. The status of non- Muslim groups in the Ottoman society was defined as “zımmi” within the system of Sheria law. With the establishment of the Turkish Republic, non-Muslim groups were defined as “azınlık” (minority). Apart from the inclusion of linguistic minorities within the legal framework, Turkish state-builders accepted an equivalent type of secular minority policy with the international regime of minority rights applied. In this universal regime, two types of guarantee for the minority groups existed. Similar to that regime, the articles 37- 45 of the Lausanne Treaty both includes citizenship rights and group-specific rights for minority groups according to Oran (1994: 286). According to the treaty, minorities are able to use all kinds of freedom of citizenship such as freedom to move and migrate, to use political and civil rights. Besides, it objects to provide opportunities to minority groups for the preservation and reproduction of their distinct identities. To establish, to direct and to control institutions (like, school foundation), to take part from the local for the needs of their institutions, to instruct, organize prayers in native languages in these institutions, to publish magazines, journals in native languages, to use native languages in daily public life, in press, in trade relations and in courts (if native language is not Turkish) are the group- specific rights provided by the Treaty (Oran, 2004: 73).

These rights seem to lead to a peaceful, multi-cultural atmosphere which remains Ottoman millet system in which communal rights are protected. However, as accepted the articles of Lausanne treaty were as inconsistent with the articles about the equality of all Turkish citizens, defined in the 1924 constitution a kind of tension went out of the surface. Savaşkan claims that many reactions against these laws occurred in the press and public opinion. These positive rights are evaluated as priorities over Muslim citizens by the public. Consequently, the Armenians as well as other of non- Muslim groups declared that they voluntarily gave up some of their right provided by Lausanne treaty in 17 November 1925 (Savaşkan in Pultar, 2009: 153). Thus, it may be said that delimited version may be applied in Turkish laws Oran claims. He adds that it is because of the fact that these articles were not applied, the rights of ethnic groups still remain as an unresolved problem in Turkey (Oran, 2001: 228).

Although the definition of Turkish citizenship does not take into account ethnic and religious belongings, the categorization of the Armenians as well as Greek and Jewish communities under the official status of minorities can be seen as an attempt to accept Islam as an important source of Turkishness. The tension between being both a citizen and a member of a minority group appears to have various social, political and economic reflections on the lives of the people who belong to a minority group. In Turkey, this applies to the displaced and dispersed Armenian people as well as other non-Muslim groups such as the *Rums* (Greeks in Turkey). During the early republican history, the sense of being a minority in the Turkish society was felt by non-Muslim peoples especially in socio-economic and political

domains. Although the 1924 population exchange between Greece and Turkey was realized under the Lausanne Convention of 1923, the possible population exchange between Armenia and Turkey aroused much public discussion until the Treaty of Gümrü (Treaty of Alexandropol) was signed in 1921, which settled the Turkish-Armenian border. The signing of this treaty constituted an obstacle for a population exchange between Turkey and Armenia (Okutan, 2004: 71-72).

Language as a constitutive part of ethnicity and nationalism was also used by the Turkish elites as an instrument in the process of nation-building and it was seen as an important dimension for the definition of Turkish citizenship. For protesting the usage of different minority languages, campaigns with the motto “Citizen, speak Turkish” are organized frequently by some of the groups such as Law Students Club, Turkish Guild (Türk Ocakları) between 1927 and 1938. The campaign was first initiated at the 4th general assembly of Turkish Guild in 1927 according to Akar (2001: 28). During the congress the necessity to speak Turkish in public space as a pre-condition to be a citizen of Turkish republic is emphasized. For that aim, collective protest, conferences are arranged. This movement was supported by many opinion leaders in the society. Together with other linguistic group, it mostly influenced non- Muslim groups. As a result, language of prayers in churches turned into Turkish, the number of courses in Turkish at community schools increased even in some municipalities fines were imposed for those who did not speak Turkish Akar mentions (Akar 2001: 18). Besides these concrete impacts of the campaign on the policies; expel of Armenian language from the

public space led to a progressive dissolution of Armenian language, which is one of the basic constituents of Armenian identity.

Together with language economic aspect of the state policies is also crucial. According to Soner, in a period when a kind of national capital is tried to be accumulated, distribution of posts to members of minority groups of are harshly criticized by the press. Besides the enrichment of the conditions of non- Muslim traders triggered some reactions not only in the Turkish press, but also among the political elites. According to the 788th article of the Public Official Law promulgated in 1926, which sets forth the qualifications of public officials, to be a Turk is a requirement for a person to be selected as a public official. Thus, although the minorities were accepted as Turkish citizens, they could not work in public institutions or occupy important posts (Soner in Keyman, İçduygu, 2009: 376).

Military service also had many restrictions preventing non-Muslims from joining military schools, from being employed in public institutions, and from using arms during military service. The Settlement Law accepted in 1934, which basically aimed the resettlement of the Kurdish population, also influenced the Armenians in eastern Anatolia (e.g. Sivas, Diyarbakır, and Harput among others). The Armenians had to be dislocated and sell their properties due to the economic and political pressures of the local administrations. Consequently they had to migrate to İstanbul or Syria. As Güven claims, following these migratory waves, the government settled the émigrés from the Balkans to the places where the Armenians used to live (Güven, 2005:203).

Despite these developments, the Armenians as there have been no recorded tensions between the Turkish state and its non-Muslim citizens until the period of the Second World War. The impact of the Second World War was deeply felt by non-Muslim groups. Nationalist political conjecture, economic difficulties stemming from war conditions, and the authoritarian single party regime of the period were the pretexts behind the promulgation of some of the laws which were misused against non-Muslim groups. Armenians were mostly affected by mandatory conscription (e.g., Incidence of Reserves-Yirmi Kura İhtiyatları) and by Capital Levy events.

First, “Incidence of Reserve” occurred in May 1941. Armenians between the ages of twenty and sixty, like other minorities from big cities such as İstanbul, Ankara or Edirne, were recruited to perform military obligations. Some of these were recruited for the second or the third time. According to Rifat Bali there were three reasons for this policy. First, the unrest mentioned above reached its peak and the government decided to recruit non-Muslims into military to keep them away from trade centers during the war period to prevent war-time gains. Second, this mobilization aimed to prevent mistrusted non-Muslims any harmful war-time plans against the state. Third, General Fevzi Çakmak, who got the information that non-Muslims would be collected and exterminated, organized such mobilization to save non-Muslims (Bali, 98: 15). Capital levy was labeled as the economic reflection of war-time period on non-Muslim group. Background of this event can be seen in the discourse of the political elites and in newspaper columns. Aktar claims that, an extensive number of critical assessments in the press accusing non-Muslim minority of

stockpiling, war profiting, and black-marketing were published during the summer of 1942 (Aktar, 1996: 103). These prejudices and dislike about the socio-economic status of the minorities paved the way for the inequitable execution of Capital Levy.

The law of Capital Levy was approved by the parliament in 1942 under the direction of the Şükrü Saraçoğlu cabinet. The tax which seemed to be imposed on all of the citizens to balance the war-time budget deficit became a big burden for non-Muslims since they had to pay very high taxes. These processes were followed by heavy confiscations and compulsory military services under difficult conditions in Aşkale. Faik Ökte, the Director of Finance of İstanbul, argues that the amount of the taxes was directly related to the membership of community rather than equal citizenship duties (Ökte in Soner, 2009: 378). In his book, “Catastrophe; Capital Levy”, he shared his testimonies about the injustices made on the application of the Capital Levy (Ökte, 1951).

Bali summarizes this process as the transfer of goods, properties, and trade from non-Muslim groups to Muslims. According to Bali, migratory waves and the decreasing desire among the non-Muslims to accumulate property and houses and their unwillingness to have permanent jobs in Turkey reflected the insecure atmosphere caused by the above mentioned policies (Bali, 1997).

With the beginning of the multi-party period in 1946 and with the liberal image of the Democrat Party, a more democratic political atmosphere for non-Muslim groups was created. The hope to live with more freedom, without being discriminated led Muslim groups to vote for Democrat party. That

tendency especially supported the victory of Democrat Party in İstanbul (Bali, 1998: 173). However, soon after, the moderate approach of the Democrat Party towards the minorities toughed parallel to the shifting foreign politics.

The tension between Greece and Turkey on the one hand and the news of the state radio about a bomb attack on Mustafa Kemal's house in Selanika on the other hand, triggered organized mass assaults, attacks, and pillage towards minority's belongings, enterprises, cemeteries, churches, factories, and houses in various locations in İstanbul such as Beyoğlu, Bakırköy, Eyüp, Kuzguncuk, Moda, and Adalar on 6-7 September 1955. According to Soner, besides its material damages, these events once again had proven the continuing vulnerable position of minority groups which led to further migratory waves (Soner in Keyman, İçduygu, 2009: 376).

Non-Muslim charitable foundations were another problematic issue for non-Muslim minority groups especially for the Armenians in Turkey. Armenian Charitable foundations, established by means of Sultan's edit, did not have any legal personality in the Ottoman legal system as Kocaoğlu points out. He claims that despite of the fact that these foundations were not legally attributed to the communities, it did not constitute a problem at the beginning of Republican period (Kocaoğlu, 2002:176). With the Charity Foundation Law promulgated in 1936, all of the minority institutions are bounded to the General Directorate of Foundations and directed, controlled by this directorate. Internal structure and management of the foundations changed accordingly. Many authors claim that, this application is against the article of the Lausanne Treaty which gave Armenians the right to establish and direct their own charity, social, and religious institutions (Kurban, Hatemi, 2009:14, Oran: 2004, 104-

105). Besides, depending on that Law another application known as 1936 Resolution (1936 Beyannamesi) took place. With that resolution, all of the foundations had to declare their immovable property to the General Directorate of Foundations. Kurban and Hatemi claims that, the reason behind that demand was to keep the record of the deeds and that application did not constitute a problem until 1960's (Kurban, Hatemi, 2009: 14). That resolution turned into an obstacle for holding old properties and acquiring new ones by the 1960s, with the impact of the political crisis between Turkey and Greece on the Cyprus Issue. To put pressure on Greek government for the resolution of the emergent conflicts between Turkish Cypriots and Greeks in Cyprus, Turkish political authorities used the issue of Charitable Foundations. 1936 Resolution was taken as a basis, the declaration made by the foundations at that period as fundamental deeds (Vakifname) of the foundations. Thus, the properties obtained by donations, testaments upon death, by other types of transactions after 1936 had to be returned to the first owners if they are alive; if not they were transferred to the Treasury as claimed by Oran (2004: 105).

That decision concerning the obligation to return these belongings to their primary holders was taken to the Supreme Court of Appeal by members of the minority groups. However, they didn't obtain any results. Thus, as minority groups had no legal proof other than foundation bills, their properties were not returned, which caused a deep frustration among the non-Muslim communities (Kocaoğlu, 2003: 176). With the European Union Adaptation Process, some new arrangements in the Foundation Legislative act in 2007 and the new Foundation Law of 2008 are made. However, Yumul claims that despite new improvements, many applications are rejected. She adds that that

kind of gap between legal arrangements and application proves the insufficiency of the new legislations (Yumul, 2005:92). Thus, the complexities of laws and regulations and the existence of inapplicable laws and regulations still stand as an obstacle for some of the non-Muslim group claims for their community foundations.

The last point which has to be mentioned is ASALA, the Armenian terrorist organization which assassinated the Turkish diplomats and organized bomb attacks in Europe starting at the 1970s until mid-1980s. These events had deep reflections on the Armenians in Turkey in terms of the social pressure they had felt. The attacks did not turn into violent actions towards the Armenian community in Turkey but many Armenians influenced by the tense atmosphere preferred to migrate from Turkey (Soner in Keyman, İçduygu: 2009, 381).

In spite of the absence of precise data about the number of Armenians in Turkey, according to one of the members of patriarchate, today, the number of Armenians in Turkey is between 60,000 and 80,000 environ. The majority of the Armenians live in İstanbul in locations such as Yeşilköy, Bakırköy, Şişli, and Kocamustafapaşa, Beyoğlu (Kentel, Karakaşlı, Özdoğan, Üstel, 2009:351).

Through the centuries, the Armenians living in İstanbul have tried to maintain their cultural existence under different social and political conditions and authorities. In time, they culturally became a more acceptable community and achieved some level of freedom. However, in times of transition and tensions, they became one of the most fragile minority groups. In other words, although their living conditions gradually improved and no big tension occurs

in daily life relations the perception of threat by the state and fear by Armenian community continue as before.

In that part, an objective historical framework of Armenian community in Turkey is drawn. However, it should be noticed that they are divergent clashing narratives about Armenian history. On one hand, the respondents' narratives vary accordingly. On the other, personal narratives, memories in some cases challenge the official histories. Generational transmission of these unofficial histories in a way to form and reform the collective way of thinking of Turkish Armenians. Before conceptualizing these narratives, the theoretical aspects of the study will be pointed out in the next chapter of the study. It will provide information and discussion about the theoretical debates on formation and maintenance of ethnic identity which will constitute the basis for the evaluation of data acquired from the field.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Identity

Described by Hall “as never being unified and in late modern times increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply, constructed across different often intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices, and positions” (Hall, 1996: 4), identity as a human attribute well-discussed by many theorists from various disciplines in contemporary social theory.

The complexity of various axes of identification such as race, ethnicity, gender, class, age and religion is debated within the discussion on the concept of identity in academic field. Categorization of identities according to its content, its formation process, and factors (which serve to delaminate it) constitutes a crucial part of the discussion about the identity issue.

The meaning of the term identity is inscribed in its etymological roots from Latin, which equate the word identity with sameness (*identitas*-same) and distinctiveness. Such commonness and differences rests on cultural elements as kinship, religion, language, and historical features as shared past and memories.

Being different or similar, bring inescapably the existence of the other and reciprocal relationship of similarity and differences with the other. The group identifies itself with a common identity and in turn categorized by the

other. Taylor claim on the formation of identity that the identity is formed by recognition, non-recognition and misrecognition of the other, supports that assumption (Taylor, 1994: 25). Thus, identities can be considered as an outcome of group identification process, of the relationship between the individual and the environment, of a way that individuals label themselves as members of particular groups as well as interpretation of primordial characteristics. Such assumptions will constitute one of the corner stones of this study. The fixity or fluidity of identities, impact of agency as well as structural factors, situational necessities and interests form the basic divides in theoretical framework.

The arguments of Jenkins found in his work “Social identity” include a big part of the divisions mentioned above. He claimed that identity; especially ethnic identity is basically about the collective identification process which is based on common cultural meanings. Additionally, he emphasized the interaction which is claimed to be necessary for the existence of every kind of social identity (Jenkins in Malesevic, 2004: 70). This can also be seen in the distinction of Mead’s conceptualization of I (the ongoing moment of unique individuality) and Me (internalized attitudes of significant other) that serve to explain the multilateralism of social identities and call this dialectical relationship as internal-external dialectics of identification (Mead in Jenkins (1996 : 20-21). Jenkins based his claims on this symbolic interactionist approach founded by Chicago School sociology according to which individuals are seen as conscious creatures who shape and are shaped by the social and physical environment around them. To put it in another way, it can be said that the relationship between individuals and contexts they are born and socialized

into as well as social positions and cultural histories shape actor identities. In a society where Armenian identity encounters a considerable number of “others” within and outside, it is not surprising that this kind of a process of identification and social categorization took place. The data from the field signifies that the impact of being labeled by dominant groups (as *azınlık – gayrimüslüm*) of feeling inner social pressure and evaluating similarities and differences with the Armenians in Armenia and diaspora Armenians leads to an internalization process and self-positioning of Armenian identity in Turkey. Thus, social boundaries which will be mentioned later by the Barthian approach are drawn out of necessity to preserve group bounds. The words of a respondent constitute an evidence for that assumption;

It is difficult to live a different identity in Turkey, difficult to be a minority. Not being disappeared, preserving our cultural characteristic is a gain for us. That’s all.

Besides these theories of identity pointing out that identity is a social construction, primordialist theories take the sense of belonging of a group as a predetermined dimension by objective elements such as common ancestry, common biological features, common social realities (language, religion traditions etc.) Although some of the branches of primordialism open a space of interaction (cultural one), general assumption of primordialism is that these basic attachments are given, inflexible, even natural. Smith categorizes primordialism as naturalist, perennialist, biological and cultural. He labels Van de Berghe, Shils and Geertz as some of important names in the literature of primordialism. These names will be further elaborated in the next part of the chapter.

These theoretical debates are also used to interpret ethnic identities and understand the formation or reformation process of these identities as one of the primary social identities. This discussion will be held in the next part of the chapter. In this case study, a synthesis of these debates will serve to make an analytical reading of Armenian identity in Turkey.

By taking various theories into consideration, this study aims to shed light on Armenian identity in Turkey based on the self-perception of Armenians on their own identity as well as historical information by attaching particular importance not only on the constructed, but also the primordial aspects of Armenian identity.

3.2. Ethnicity, Ethnic Identity, Ethnic Group

Ethnicity and ethnic identity became of more interest to anthropologists and sociologists as well as to other disciplines since the 1960s by the means of political developments and ethnic conflicts, and remained so to the present. They are mostly conceptualized in relation to the some classical concepts such as race, nation, and culture. Nevertheless, their meaning could not be defined in a clear-cut manner because of their variability according to time, place, and condition under which they are used.

The roots of the word “ethnic” are derived from the Greek word *ethnos* (non-Christian, non-Jewish, Pagan) refers to a range of situations in which a collectivity of humans lives and acts together. It could be translated today as the term “nation” which is used to define in Greek those who do not belong to the community which they are part of or one who does not share same fate to say differently, i.e., “the other” (Cornell and Hartmann, 1998). However, in

current usage the term “nation” is associated with dominant group within established political organizations and ethnic with the sub-national units, the minority groups within these political organizations. Since the ethnic past of the Armenian community displays a sense of being uprooted and dispersed throughout the world, there is hardly any doubt that this notion is much more complicated to conceptualize in the Turkish Armenians case. Besides, as in some of the respondents self-label of a nation and as historical evidence suggests, some traits of ethnic consciousness can be used alternatively under varying circumstances. For example, the issue of homeland, limited interaction with the Armenians from other lands, and the existence of a considerable number of Armenian diaspora dispersed throughout the world makes the issue much more complicated and multi-layered. Safran describes the term diaspora as those who are dispersed from an original "center" to at least two peripheral places who preserve a memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland as well as relations with homeland. Also diasporic communities think they are not and perhaps will not be fully admitted by their host country and idealized the ancestral home as a and see it as place of final return. Those bounds with homeland created a sense of solidarity and group consciousness (Safran, 1991: 83-84).

In this respect their transnational bounds, that is, maintenance of their relations with the Armenian diasporic groups and with the Armenians in Armenia, create a multi-dimensional way of labeling the Armenian community in Turkey, İstanbul. The self-labeling of the respondents reflected that blurred naming process. It could be also said that by the emphasis on the significance of memory and homeland as well as nostalgia for Anatolian lands, the

Armenians in Turkey also show the traces of a displaced diasporic community. However, this label was never articulated in their self-labeling process during the interviews. In this context, they move from one circle of community to and label themselves as part of the Armenian nation, of Armenian community or of Turkish nation in different contexts. At this point the definition of the concept of ethnic group becomes important since it is one of the core concepts of this study.

According to Schermerhorn,

Ethnic group is defined here as a collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood. Examples of such symbolic elements are: kinship patterns, physical contiguity (as in localism and sectionalism), religious affiliation, language or dialect forms, tribal affiliation, nationality, phenotypical features or any combination of these. A necessary accompaniment is some consciousness of kind among members of the group (Schermerhorn in Hutchinson and Smith, 1996:6).

Similarly, Hutchinson and Smith defines an ethnic group as a type of cultural collectivity having a proper name, myths, common ancestry, shared memories of a common past, elements of a common culture, a link with a homeland, and a sense of solidarity (Hutchinson and Smith, 1996:7). Thus, different usages of the term more or less complement each other each of which emphasizes same cultural or biological characteristics that refer to other peoples who belong to groups unlike their own. In that context, the relational or subjective nature of these constituents Armenian ethnic identity, their variant significance for collectivities, and the divergence or intersection points between ascription of others and self-ascription of these constituents had to be

taken into account. In this study, the respondents' perceptions about their own culture highlighted some of the above mentioned elements which appeared to have a significant impact on their identity. These include issues such as religion, traditions, language, collective memory, shared past, and belongingness to an ancestral homeland.

In this respect, Karner point out that these elements are reconstructed by ethnic identity. He affirms that ethnic identity effects daily life and practices of individuals as a kind of structure of action, as a way of seeing, and as a structure of feelings (Karner, 2007). To put in a different way, ethnicity in way determines the limits within which groups are allowed to behave (social conducts and norms), reproduces the ways of seeing and interpreting the world as well as the "other". Thus, it creates a mode of feeling, belongingness and memory. Cornell and Hartman focus on the opposite side of the process and mention some of the factors contributing to the construction of ethnicity such as political, labor markets, residential space, and social institutions. Endogamy, residential and job concentration, stereotyping, and discrimination together contribute to the construction of ethnic identities (Cornell and Hartmann, 1998). Similar to that Eriksen claims that, ethnic identity as a social identity includes aspects of gain and loss in interaction process with those others that they have a minimum regular interaction with (Eriksen, 2002:12-13).

The impact of the factors strengthening the otherness will be discussed through Turkish Armenian identity construction by means of the field data in the following chapter.

Within this context I will now discuss the main arguments of classical theoreticians on ethnic identity formation.

3.3. Theories of Ethnic Identity

3.3. a. Classical Theories of Sociology and Ethnicity

Nowadays, the meaning of ethnic group usually signifies those communities who are not perceived as part of the majority group in a given society. Simmel's concept of stranger is suitable for analyzing the sense of being a minority as well as of being the other in a given society. Simmel's stranger is never a total member of the group, and an owner of the soil. He is the signifier of difference for the majority of the population. In other words, the presence of a stranger is crucial for self-definition of the majority group (Simmel, 1996).

The data derived from most of the interviews has shown that Armenians feels as a part of the population and one of the owners of the soil and they are critical about being perceived as representing the "other" of the dominant ethnic group in Turkey, which are the Turks. The word of one of the respondents reflects such belief; "Sometimes some people make us feel that we came to these lands from somewhere else, somebody settled us here and we are still waiting to leave these lands."

Another point to mention about Simmel's theory is his impact of the size of ethnic group on ethnic solidarity of the group. He claims that "solidarity decreases in measure in which numerical increase involved the admission of heterogeneous elements while a similar minimum of norms can hold together a large group more easily than a small one" (Simmel, 1950: 95). In Armenian case, that kind of decrease in cohesiveness is not related to the increase in number of people within the boundaries of Armenian community but the

inclusion of new ethnic elements within the boundaries as a result of mixed marriages. During the interviews, mixed- marriages are seen as a basic factor which weakens ethnic identity and traditions. The issue will be analyzed further with reference to respondent's perception in the following chapter.

Apart from Simmel, classical sociological theoreticians viewed the issue of ethnicity from a different perspective. Marx and Durkheim never explicitly and deeply dealt with this topic but they both saw ethnicity as a traditional bound which is at risk of disappearing. According to Maleseviç, Marx highlighted the supremacy of class over the epiphenomenon of ethnic identity which will be transcended once communist society is established. Durkheimian perspective, on the other hand, evaluates ethnic ties as a kind of element like religion which creates collective consciousness holding society together. Moreover, it also creates group solidarity which needs to be re-affirmed by its symbols for survival (Malesevic, 2004). Religious rituals and symbols occupy a crucial position in Turkish Armenian identity. In this context, by looking at their reflection on Armenian people's daily life, Durkheimian placement of ethnic bound does not seem meaningless. However, the dysfunctionality of ethnic ties in modern times can be refuted easily by recent historical evidence. The significance of the concept of community for Armenians in Turkey could serve to put the Durkheimian perspective in the right place. Besides the concept of community could serve to illustrate the sense of belongingness of the Turkish Armenians have. Tonnies' dichotomy of *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (association) may also serve to clarify the issue.

The community referring to groupings based deep emotional bonds, on feelings of togetherness and solidarity is characterized by dependence, emotional, face to face ties non-rationality, non- specialization and social integrity for Tonniens. As opposed to that, association is based on rational, coordinated action for common interest, for achieving common means (Day, 2006: 4-5). As hidden in these definitions, by the modernization process we witnessed a belief on the loss of community and its replacement with society which is characterized by the emergence of specialized, rational, self-interested, and urbanized individual during the 19th century. In contradiction with this development, ethnic and cultural revival of groups overthrew the belief that communities have declined. Thus, the approaches which locates community' in the settled social relations of the past seems to be reversed by the re-appearance of communal identities. Thus, in other words, communities re-emerged as a protective and comfortable heaven accompanying modernity. In that respect, it may be said that community still occupy an important place in the mind of people and it still has a function in shaping personal ad social identities and subjectivity's of individuals. Relative to that Revill claims that, "It has value as an analytical concept, because it focuses attention on how individuals, groups and places become tied together through the sense of belonging" (Revill in Day 2006, 157).

It does not obviously mean that community, by all means, defines a closed, non-rational, marginalized social association as in the case of the Armenian community in Turkey. While trying to protect their solidarity networks to maintain their ethnic and cultural identity, the Armenian community does not constitute a threat for the integrity of the Turkish society.

For example, during the interviews some respondents avoided using the term community because of the negative connotation it had gained in modern times. The tendency to view ethnicity as a declining phenomenon with the emergence of the modern era continues with Weber. Weber was the first theorist in sociological literature, who used the term ethnicity and dealt with it thoroughly by combining the subjective and objective aspects of ethnicity. In his work “Economy and Society”, Weber described an ethnic group as such,

We shall call ‘ethnic groups’ those human group that entertain the subjective belief in common descent because of physical similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration; this belief must be important for the propagation of group formation; conversely, it does not matter whether or not an objective blood kinship relationship exists (Weber, 1922: 389).

With that last emphasis on self-perception of differences and subjective belief in common descent, he laid the foundation of the constructivist position of ethnicity. Besides, his arguments about strengthening and reconfirmation of that belief and self-perception through the transmission of a shared memory clarify the issue of ethnicity further. Weber’s definition of ethnicity fits into the perspective developed in this study where it was observed that shared collective memories accumulated from the late Ottoman period became a source for re-constructing a sense of togetherness and continuity within the Armenian community in Turkey. This issue will be evaluated in the next part in relation to the concepts “memory”, “history” and ”homeland”.

In addition to shared historical experiences, Weber bases the belief of common descent on multiple factors varying from physical resemblances to shared cultural practices. He argues that common language and ritual

regulation of life as defined by shared religious beliefs constitute the crucial factors on ethnic identity formation. It also shapes physical appearance and daily life conduct (Weber in Hutchinson and Smith: 1996, 36). This claim on religion and language partly fits with the situation of the Armenian in Turkey. By all means language is an important historical constituent of Armenian identity. Nevertheless, as opposed to Weber's claims, the differences of dialect constitute a gap in the cultural transmission process between the Turkish Armenians, Armenians in Armenia and Diaspora Armenians. This point was emphasized during the interviews as an obstacle to the unity of the larger Armenian community. Together with language, religion which was also mentioned by some of the respondents as "the basic source of Armenian traditions and identity", appeared to be more significant within and outside the Armenian community in Turkey. In his book "Chosen Peoples", Smith also emphasizes the strong influence of religion on ethnicity by referring to the Armenian case (Smith, 2003: 25). According to Smith, religion helps to create a sense of being a part of a historic community with the myths- memories and rituals it brings. Especially for the dispersed group, religion became a way to restore their sense of solidarity. The Christianization of Armenia around 314 and invention of a unique alphabet served to construct Armenian ethno-religious identity (Smith, 2003: 69). That co-existence will be discussed further in the next parts of the chapter.

Another relationship which could be established between Smith and Weber's perspectives is on the issue of ethnic honor. Malesevic interprets Weber's definition of ethnicity as a kind of hereditary status group which is bounded by endogamy and which expresses itself through ethnic honor where

ethnic honor creates a boundary mechanism and social closure (Malesevic, 2004: 25). The belief in being “the chosen people” as the first Christian nation is associated with the idea of differentiation from “others” on the basis of having a separate language and customs as well as belonging to a different sect of Christianity. The arguments of the respondents during the interviews support the above argument as will be discussed in the following chapter.

Another point which is worth mentioning is the value Weber attaches to the political organization on the basis of the belief in common descent and survival of an ethnic group. Weber argues that collective political action cause the creation of the belief in common ancestry. In his own words, “On the other hand, it is primary the political community, no matter how artificially organized, that inspires the belief in common ethnicity” (Weber, 1978: 389). He adds that, “All history shows how easily political action can give rise to the belief in blood relationship, unless gross differences of anthropological type impede it” (Weber, 1978: 393).

The case of the Armenian community in Turkey does not exactly fit with what Weber argues. In fact, the formation of Armenian identity in Turkey has followed an opposite direction. Due to the Ottoman political structure, the sense of being a minority ethnic group as well as the dominance of religion in the community life in the Ottoman society, a sense of ethnic identity had already been constructed before any kind of political consciousness arouse among minorities of the Ottoman society. Millet system based on religiously defined communities, with separate institutional and communal lives creates an

ethno-religious sense of belongingness among the communities. That sense also constitutes the core of Armenian identity.

On the other hand, the emergence of national consciousness among the minorities during the late Ottoman period may also be considered as a factor that contributed further to the strengthening of Armenian ethnic identity. This appears to be important in the maintenance of Armenian ethnic identity even after the formation of the Turkish nation-state in 1923.

In conclusion, classical theories on ethnicity and nationalism may be considered as the first step for the evaluation of the process of ethnic identity formation. Especially as Hutchinson and Smith points out, Weber's theory includes vigorous sources for subsequent debates such as cultural and biological differences limiting ethnic affiliations and political-historical factors which shape the sense of common ethnicity (Hutchinson and Smith, 1996: 32). The complexity of the processes discussed above necessitates the merging of diverse perspectives on ethnic identity. This appears to be necessary for dealing with the various components of the issue. Therefore, further elaboration has to be made to locate the sources and dynamics of the process of Turkish Armenian identity formation. The main axis of the debates of various theories of ethnicity can be summarized by referring to the concepts as listed by Brubaker (2006: 35). These are fixity, fluidity, instability, situationality, essentiality, construction, interaction, structure, agency, sameness, and difference.

In the next part of the chapter, the strengths and weakness of some major theories and approaches such as primordialism, modernism, circumstantialism/ instrumentalism and social constructivism, and

assimilationism will be discussed. This discussion will then be related to the different dimensions of Turkish Armenian identity formation.

3.3. b. Primordialism; A response to assimilationism

With the impact of the decolonization process of European colonies and the formation of new nations after the Second World War, the belief on the gradual process of melting of diverse ethnic and immigrant group into one pot came to an end suddenly. In other words, the expectations of the assimilationist model, conceptualized basically by Park and Thomas, which was based on the assumption that a common cultural life would be formed by the internalization of sentiments of the dominant group failed to be realized. Thus, the collapse of the assimilation model and the need to elaborate on the survival of ethnic sentiments leads to the development of the primordialist understanding of ethnicity (Cornell and Hartmann, 1998; 44-49).

The emergence of primordialism as an attempt to capture the nature of social ties such as ethnic ones in different societies can be traced back to the 1950s when an article was written by historian Edward Shills (Shills, 1957). Primordial understanding of ethnicity suggests that the sense of belonging to an ethnic group is a fixed, timeless, unchanging, and a natural thing, which manifests itself by objective biological features or cultural givens. Primordial understanding of ethnicity differs from earlier theories of ethnicity in terms of its emphasis on the quality and roots of ethnic ties. To begin with, naturalism, as the first branch of primordialism, sees ethnic identity as a predetermined and inborn identity. Thus, existing differences among ethnic groups are conceptualized as necessary and natural. This version of primordialism appears

to be outdated other than being used to mobilize communities for political action. (Özkırımlı, 2008: 85). However, a least radical version of primordialism is conceptualized by Smith, which is labeled as perennialism. According to Smith, from the early ages ethnic identities preserves its core that later constitute the basis of nations. Besides, he argues that” this term denotes those who hold that nations (if not nationalism) have existed throughout recorded history, but not a part of natural order” (Smith, 1999: 5). In his analysis of perenialism, he labels Armenians as one of the nations in antiquity but he adds that it is hard to make a one-to one association with past and present nations (Smith, 1999: 5).

The second branch is the biological approach, which is based on socio-biology, described by Wilson as “the systematic study of the biological basis of all social behavior” (Wilson in Malesevic, 2004: 79). It takes its base from the biological approach searching for the roots of ethnic ties in strong genetic characteristics selected through environmental pressures and deep instincts. Van den Berghe claims that “genes are selected through environmental pressures and they impose limits on culture” (Van den Berg in Malesevic, 2004: 82). According to him, three types of instincts are dominant in human relations. These are preference of kin over non-kin for self-reproduction (kin selection), cooperation for mutual benefit (reciprocity), and use of various types of force for unilateral gain (coercion) (Van den Berg in Malesevic, 2004: 82). The givenness of culture which is at a subordinate position under the dominance of nature is emphasized by the third and last approach, i.e., cultural primordialism. The works of Shills and Geertz are associated by this approach. Their major claim is that primordial ties which are based on common kin,

religion, race, language, region, religion, and custom are basically given and enduring. Instead of being a matter of calculation, Shills and Geertz attach those from the same kin who share common cultural features a deep sense of loyalty which is difficult to give up. In Geertz's own words;

By a primordial attachment is meant one that stems from the assumed 'givens'-or, more precisely, as culture is inevitability involved in such matters, the assumed "givens"- of social existence: immediate contiguity and kin connection mainly, but beyond them the givenness that stems from being born into particular religious community, speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of a language, and following particular social practices. These congruities of blood, speech custom, and so on, are seen to have an ineffable, and at times overpowering, coerciveness in and of themselves. One is bound to one's kinsman, one's neighbor, one's fellow believer, ipso facto; as the result not merely of personal affection, practical necessity, common interest or incurred obligation but at least in great part by virtue of some unaccountable absolute import attributed to the very tie itself. The general strength of such primordial bonds, and the types of them that are important, differs from person to person from society to society and from time to time (Geertz in Hutchinson and Smith, 1996: 42).

Besides analyzing the nature of ethnic ties, Geertz and Shills dealt with the impact of these ties on modern state. Geertz relates the reason behind the chronic tension for the new nation-states with the sense of attachment people feel through blood ties, race, language, location, religion, or tradition. He argues that, new states are abnormally susceptible to serious disaffection based on primordial attachments (Geertz in Hutchinson and Smith, 1996: 41). In this respect, his position differs from Shills' perspective. Shills mentions that these ties constitute the moral basis of modern society and refers to the peaceful coexistence of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* within the modern state (Fenton, 2010: 74). At that point, Geertz and Shills' arguments seem to fit to Turkish Armenian identity formation. Following the integrated structure of the Turkish

society established by the formation of the Turkish nation-state, various ethnic communities have survived locally and maintained their identities as is the case with the Armenians. However, such coexistence can always turn into a conflict in times of vulnerable political contexts and create a kind of chronic tension as claimed by Shills. Even in such cases, ethnic identity with its broader cultural universe responds to the needs of the community and gives meaning to its existence. Verkuyten also argues that

By living up cultural requirements of value and meaning, humans become part of something meaningful which goes beyond their individual existence and extends into the past as well as the future (Verkuyten, 2005: 87).

To sum up, although primordialism constitutes an important step for the elaboration of the concept of ethnicity and the power and persistence of primordial ties, it also has many weaknesses. Basic criticism evolves around the denial of individual agency and structural factors because of the overemphasis on the fixity, givenness and coerciveness of ethnic ties. Primordialism, in a sense, does not consider the way in which people manage to negotiate their ethnic identity according to power relations and external categorization of people. It also does not take into account the changeable character of ethnic ties (Verkuyten, 2005: 87-88).

Historical incidences show that even the most resistant primordial ties have gone under a transformation process during their histories. One of the important instrumentalist scholars, Paul Brass, mentions that the intensity or importance of linguistic attachments as well as other attachments such as religious, which are all components of ethnic identity, could vary across time, place and circumstances. He adds that except for some ancient communities,

ethnic ties are social and political constructions (Brass in Hutkinson and Smith, 1996:85-86). Similarly, as Smith claims all social and ethnic ties are dependent on various factors such as economic or political and they change according to context, circumstances or interests (Smith, 1995: 33b). Changes made by the members of a minority group as in case of the Armenians in Turkey for better job opportunities or for the improvement of their social life in general could be seen as clear-cut examples refuting the unquestioned assumptions of primordialism. These a priori assumptions also ignore the role of interaction among individuals which is inherent in the nature of ethnic ties as will be discussed in the context of constructivist theories. Moreover, Eller and Coughlan point out that although primordialists focus on the role of emotions in primordial attachments, they disregard the process of reconstruction and refreshment of emotions through rituals or daily activities which de-socialize or mystify the phenomena. They summarize the above arguments by arguing that;

Ethnicity is surely an affect issue; making it distinct strictly material or instrumental issues, but by no means make it primordial, since emotion is not necessary or ordinarily primordial, but has a clear analyzable socio-genesis. In fact, in the end primordialism belies the same faulty approach which has already come under fire in the realms of culture and affect-taking the phenomena that are simply 'already existing' and 'persistent' and reifying, mystifying them into things that are 'natural', 'spiritual' and 'have always existed and always will' (Eller & Coughlan, in Hutkinson and Smith 1996: 50).

Thus, it would be hardly suffice to say that primordialism can comprehensively interpret and give meaning to the current ethnic ties and relations in multicultural and modern nation-states. The debates evolving around the inefficiency of primordialism in responding to the current needs

paved the way to new development of new modernist theories of ethnicity. However, modernist theories vary to a great extent according to their core assumptions and concepts. As some of the theories highlight the variability of ethnic ties according to changing conditions, some others see modernization as the reason behind ethnic decline or/and revival. In the following pages, the above mentioned modernist theories of ethnicity will be discussed in-depth with a focus on circumstantialism.

3.3. c. Instrumentalism; Ethnicity as a subjectively felt reality

Fenton claims that two distinctive analytical questions constitute the basis of this branch of theories. The first one is about the nature of ethnicity and the second about whether and when ethnic ties become important (Fenton, 2010: 82). These questions signify the fluidity and contingency of ethnicity and depending on this, the importance of the circumstances or situations in the survival of ethnic identity.

The definition of ethnicity according to these approaches can be made as, “not utterly a unique form of social identity and organization *casu sui* is rather essentially and ultimately associated with two other mundane forces: social conditions and interest” (Eller, 1999:80).

With the process of modernization, people from various ethnicities gathered inevitably under the same nation-state and became obliged to live together by sharing scarce resources. At that point, priorities of ethnic ties were either diminished or reconstructed according to new opportunities, incentives or necessities. In other words, ethnic relations were rearranged in response to emergent economic and political developments. A similar tendency can be

found in Abhen Cohen's account. According to Cohen, "Ethnicity in a modern world is a type of interest grouping. It is a result of intensive struggle between groups over new strategic positions of power, places of employment, taxation fund for development, education, political positions and so on" (Cohen in Malesevic, 2004: 115-116).

During this process, the selection of particular cultural elements such as dialects or religious practices or styles of dress from a variety of available alternatives could be directed by political elites who are capable of mobilizing communities. In this context Brass claims that the variability and non-givenness of ethnic identities constitute an important political resource for political elites who seek political and economic power. Thus, these ethnic identities can easily turn into national ones. According to him, the reason behind this ethnic transmission process is the need to acquire in-group solidarity for different purposes such as acquiring new rights or social statuses; this can only be achieved by the leadership of religious elites, religious foundations, and religious schools who use ethnic language legally (Özkırmı, 2008: 140).

What follows from this is that although the Armenian community in Turkey tries to maintain its kinship relations for group solidarity and for in-group economical support networks, the background conditions for ethnic revitalization as discussed above does not seem to exist among the Armenians. Competition and conflict stemming from the struggle for scarce economic resources can lead to the promotion of ethnic ties. In this context, many circumstantialist theories about ethnic minorities deal with the impact of competition on ethnic identity formation. Some focus on the intersection of

ethnic identity and class identity when defining ethnic positions in the labor market (labor market theory) while others point out to the concentration of ethnic groups in different sectors (middleman theory). The evidence from the fieldwork of this study suggests that middle man theory explains better the position of the Armenians in Turkey. From the Ottoman times, the Armenians appeared in commercial jobs since, as non-Muslim minority groups, they had no access to official and military positions (Armstrong in Hutchison and Smith, 1996: 123).

Besides as Zenner claims, in agrarian societies the ruling elite disdained commercial activities and majority did not develop the necessary skills for such jobs. He claims that minorities, “Through their willingness to work hard for low profits and their ethnic solidarity, they filled the niches of economy which were too expensive for the large corporations to fill” (Zenner in Hutchison and Smith, 1996: 180). Armenians, continued to exercise their trade skill acquired from Ottoman period, in the Republican period. However, Zenner claims that in some cases, especially in times of political and economic crisis, anger is directed towards minority traders. Also, they have to compete with the majority traders. In such periods, the government gives support to majority traders to break the monopoly of minority traders’s (Zenner in Hutchison and Smith, 1996). During the early republican period Armenians experienced the developments mentioned in the middle man theory which created a tense atmosphere from time to time. Capital Levy is an appropriate example of such application. As a consequence, sometimes being an Armenian became a disadvantageous position in the job market where the Turks were preferred. Working in the same places as craftsman (mostly grand bazaar) together with

the Turks and experiencing conflict over competitive jobs became important source for the strengthening of Armenian identity. The experiences of the respondents about this issue will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

At that point rational choice theory which sees individual interest as the reason behind ethno-cultural claims can seem akin. Nonetheless, rational choice theory focuses mainly on individual self-interest and rational decision making which seems difficult to associate with a kind of collective identity as Malesevic describes (2006: 106). In other words, all kinds of decision-making and behavior, which stems from ethnic identity, cannot be explained only by interest and personal gains. One has to take into consideration the circumstances which create new necessities. The statement of one of the respondents is worth to mention here, “After the 1999 earthquake in İstanbul I joined the support teams for the Kocaeli region and even there I hesitated to say that I was an Armenian.”

Depending on the above mentioned evidence, the approach developed by Connel and Hartmann to draw a general and all inclusive framework under the name of “circumstantialism” seems to be promising for this study. Connel and Hartmann claim that circumstances put the groups in particular positions and encourage them to see their interests in particular ways. Hence, by his own words;

Common to circumstantialist approaches, regardless of the degree to which they focus on interest or instrumentality, is the idea that ethnic groups are largely products of concrete social and historical situations that- for a variety of reasons –heighten or reduce the salience and /or the utility of ethnic and racial identities in the lives of individuals and groups (Connel and Hartmann, 1998: 60).

Besides, in the anthropological literature, the terms situationalism, instrumentalism and circumstantialism are used under the same category. Although these terms are used in various ways, often they summarize the main idea mentioned above. Fenton, too, says that there is little divergence among the use of these terms. Fenton claims that in circumstantialism ethnicity gain or lose its importance depending on context. Situationalism is concerned with the changes in conditions. Instrumentalism typically refers to the material and political reasons for the deployment of ethnic identity (Fenton, 2003: 82).

Lastly, the conceptualization one of the modernist scholars of nationalism, Benedict Anderson, will be mentioned briefly. Although Anderson adopted the modernist idea that modernization destructed primordial identities, his thoughts paved the way to the development of a new conceptualization of nationalism. Anderson developed the concept of “imagined communities” which can be accepted as a new form of social constructivism (Anderson, 1991). This concept will be discussed further in the following pages.

What Anderson refers to with the concept of imagined communities is a community which is based not on the daily face-to-face relations, but on a sense of community as a kind of mental image of affinity which is shared by members of a nation. As Anderson puts it, nation “ is imagined because the members of even the smallest one will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion “ (Anderson, 1991: 6).

Taking into consideration the dispersed Armenian community thorough the world, the nostalgia for the past and the emphasis on religion and language as sources of important integrative bounds, the concept explains the roots of identity formation of the Turkish Armenians.

Despite their valuable contributions to the study of ethnicity, circumstantialist approaches are criticized for missing some of the important points about the nature, content and persistence of ethnicity. These limitations stem from not considering the emergent interests or circumstances as outcomes of the process of modernization and nation-state formation. It is argued that reducing ethnic phenomena only to interests and circumstances makes it impossible to deal with the concept of ethnicity in and of itself. In this context Connell and Hartmann argues that, “It attributes the resilience of ethnicity to something outside the realm of the ethnic, to some other set of forces, such as economic or political interest” (Connell and Hartmann, 1998: 65).

Thus, the emotional power of ethnic identity and socialization process are thus, neglected. In this respect, circumstantialist approach handles ethnicity as a by- product of structural positions and only as an instrument and assumes that ethnic ties will diminish in the long run.

It could be said that the two main approaches mentioned above are not mutually exclusive, but complementary. The content of constructivist theory in a way supports this point, since the impact of emotional power which ethnicity has on people’s daily lives and of structural variables which shape ethnic identities (and social interaction among ethnic groups) constitutes the content of constructivist approach.

Besides, having deep historical and traditional roots, the Armenian community has encountered different cultures in different time periods. These encounters reconstructed and are still reconstructing Armenian identity by creating “us” and “them” divisions. These divisions are also fostered by some major religious and literal myths, memories and symbols constructed by the larger Armenian community. In this context a multi-dimensional approach could serve better to interpret the Armenian identity in Turkey.

Only a few scholars tend to combine some of the basic approaches mentioned above. For example, Smith and Armstrong’s ethno-symbolist theory and Barth and Cohen’s constructivist approach appears to constitute a powerful perspective for evaluating the Armenian identity in Turkey. In the next part of the chapter these approaches will be elaborated further.

3.3. d. Ethno-symbolism: Re-interpretation of Ethnicity

To begin with, ethno-symbolist approach can be considered as a mid-way which harmonizes subjective and objective aspects of ethnicity. In other words, it merges the modernist and primordialist perspectives on ethnicity. Ethno-symbolic perspective claims that there exists a deeply rooted ethnic core which is fueled by cultural elements and which influences the process of nation-formation. Armstrong and Smith as two important representatives of ethno-symbolist theory adopted basically similar ways for interpreting the link between present nations and past ethnic communities. There are minor differences between them like looking at ethnicity through differences or similarities that stem from cultural content.

Ethno-symbolist perspective, while acknowledging the insights of constructivism, opens a new path for interpreting ethnic identities and ethnic communities as well. One of their important contributions is worded by Smith as follows, “This emphasis on culture, in the broader sense, introduce some flexibility into ethnic membership, which in normal circumstances allows for a degree of demographic replenishment and cultural borrowing hence social and cultural adaptation” (Smith, 1999: 15). In other words, while they position cultural content in the center, they also take into consideration situational factors which influence the interactions between the individuals and thus, transform the cultural content. Migrations, wars, invasions, slavery, and exile can be given as examples of events having a big impact on history and ethnic consciousness of communities that are shaped by collective memories and collective remembering.

In this context Smith’s distinction between ethnic categories and ethnic community appears to be beneficial for understanding the importance of ethnic consciousness for ethnic communities and for understanding the subjective criteria for the formation of ethnic identity. Smith differentiates ethnic categories from ethnic communities or ethnies by referring to the absence of ethnic consciousness, common name or territory or solidarity in the former. Moreover, he refers to the level of cultural reservoir obtained during ethno-history. He describes ethnic communities or ethnies as such,

Ethnies, then, are named groups with shared ancestry myths and memories or ethno-history’ with a strong association, though not necessary possession of, a historic territory or homeland (Smith, 1999:105).

Hence, transmission from ethnic categories to ethnic communities has to be evaluated with the notions such as myths, memories, homeland, nostalgia, religious traditions, and language. It is through these notions that Smith explains how ethnic solidarity is kept alive and how ethnic communities maintain to survive from the past to the present. Despite the fact that these notions seem to describe subjective and stable situations, they evolve in ethno-history and are transmitted through the generations. This is an acculturation process and it eventually becomes part of collective identity of an ethnic community.

It should be noted that the concept of nation is used in the literature interchangeably with the notion of ethnic community. This usage is criticized by some scholars as Connor does. Connor claims that although ethno-symbolists only refer to the cultural content in the process of nation-formation, they use the term nation in a too inclusive way and mix the terms ethnicity, ethnic group and nation (Connor in Özkırımlı, 2008 1994: 72-73-93). Following this argument the Armenian community will be named as a nation in this study as defined by the ethno-symbolist account.

Below the concepts that ethno-symbolists use to define and discuss the development and continuity of ethnic identity will be discussed. This argument will be supported with Smith and Armstrong's analysis of the Armenian nation in their works entitled "Chosen Peoples" and "Archetypal Diasporas", respectively.

Relating the Past with the Present: Change and Continuity

According to Smith, the reasons behind the persistence of ethnic core of ethnic groups have four dimensions. These are community, territory, history, and destiny. In his book *Chosen Peoples* these dimensions are exemplified and discussed with reference to the Armenian nation (Smith, 2003:66-73).

A community to preserve its ethnic identity should have a sense of belongingness and awareness of the differences of us and them. At that point the sources of “sacred communion of people” as labeled by Smith, becomes important (Smith, 2003: 32). In Smith’s view the definition sacred community is linked with common ancestry (putative or not), a public cult (which causes a kind of holiness and a special relationship with God), and common moral rules and duties. With this definition the crucial bound between the divine and community turns the community into a community of faith or an ethno-religious community. Thus, the Armenian community can be described as an ethno-religious community where it difficult to distinguish Armenian orthodoxy and Apostolic Church from Armenian ethnic identity within this framework. In other words, religion and ethnicity are intertwined and are inseparable from Armenian identity. While attaching specific importance to religious beliefs Armstrong also refers to linguistic distinctiveness. He claims that although Armenians adopted other languages than Armenian, scriptures and liturgy stayed in the original sacral language, as will be discussed below (Armstrong in Hutckinson and Smith, 1996: 126).

In this context Smith refers to the honor that Armenians have in being the first Christian nation and names them as one of the three chosen peoples,

the others being the Jews and Ethiopians. Smith argues that being the first Christian nation” has been a source of national pride and comfort in darker times, especially when Armenians felt deserted and alone” (Smith, 1999: 69). To put it differently, at critical times such as war, invasion or deportations, this feature of the community provides the survival of the community.

The myth of ethnic election is one of myths which serve to ensure the survival of ethnic groups for long periods. According to Smith, the myths are composed of several elements derived from various sources. Besides, the meaning of them may change for different members of ethnic community and nation from diverse classes and status group (Smith, 1999: 62). This reference to myths was also worded by the respondents during the interviews as will be discussed in the following chapter.

Similar to Smith (1986) Armstrong, too, argues that myths and symbols play a vital role in unifying populations and ensuring their continuity over many generations. He considers a range of factors such as nostalgia for the past, life-style, religious civilizations and organizations, imperial mythomoteurs, and language fissures in creating shifting ethnic ties. He claims that “myth, symbol, communication and a cluster of associated attitudinal factors are usually more persistent than purely material factors” (1982: 9).

Hence, it is possible to argue that myths legitimize the existence of an ethnic group and give a sense of solidarity and security to it. For members of an ethnic group place and date of birth, land lived or migrated, ancestry, periods of success, decline or rebirth constitute the sources for these myths. Although the significance and selectivity of myths vary, these myths occupy a central place in the collective memory of the Armenian community and restore

their sense of uprootedness. This is true especially for the diaspora. Parallel to this argument, Turkish Armenians living in İstanbul describe Anatolia as a place of origin and as a homeland where they used to live in the past. Thus, Anatolia was perceived as the primary source of myths in the collective memory of the Armenians.

The territorial dimension and relative to that the historical dimension of ethnic identity should also be mentioned as the second constituent of the sacred communion of people. The land that an ethnic lived in and fought against, and defeated its enemies which is also a place where its culture flourished is significant for the continuity of ethnic ties and ethnic solidarity.

Smith calls such lands associated with the historical experiences of ethnic communities as “ethnoscape”. In his own words, “Other terrains we might term historic ‘ethnoscapes’ cover a wider extend of land, present a tradition of continuity and are held to constitute an ethnic unity, because the terrain invested with collective significance is felt to be integral to a particular historical culture community or ethnies, and ethnic community is seen as an intrinsic part of that poetic landscape” (Smith, 1999:150).

Such attachment of a population to a particular land and its history gives birth to the collective memory of an ethnic group. Besides, having a sacred place which is God-given, in the minds of the members of an ethnic group, i.e., homeland unifies members of a diasporic minority group as is the case with the Armenians. The idea of homeland initiates a kind of identification with the whole group and keeps the collective memories of a group alive. Accordingly, this is named as “territorialization of memory” by

Smith (Smith, 2003: 134). By this term he refers to the link established between lands and people. Smith defines this as a kind process by which the community is attached to land with its resources, natural features, and historical monuments and the tombs of their forefathers. In this respect, the terrain gains a special significance in the hearts and minds of the community members who live on these lands (Smith: 2003: 135-136). Most of the respondents who live in İstanbul, Anatolia was remembered as a place of joy, peace and unity. This reflected a kind of nostalgia for the past. In this respect, collective memory can be seen as a kind of reconstructed collective heritage. Following this line of thought, Halbwach claims that collective memory is not totally a reflection of the past in minds of a collectivity. Instead, it selectively picks narrated stories which are accumulated through time. Halbwach also adds that collective memory which is external to the individual, not only reconstructs the past, but also organizes the experiences of the present and future (Halbwach in Sancar, 2010: 41). The impact of collective memory on the present and future will be evaluated in light of the interviewees' perceptions in the following chapter.

As mentioned above, the past is a significant point of reference for ethnic identity. Smith uses two concepts for illustrating two turning points in the collective remembering of ethnic communities, that is, "Golden age" and "trauma" (1999: 215). These two concepts were also frequently repeated together with the concept of homeland during the interviews with the Armenian in İstanbul.

To begin with, the myth of golden age may include political and/or military success as well as religious artistic creativity and intellectual discovery

of architects and poets, painters, musicians, and dramatists. Armstrong focuses on that gold age myths of Armenians. As Smith claims,

Armenians as well as Greeks and Jews look back nostalgically to golden age of great kings, sages, poets, yearned to return to ancient capitals with sacred sites and buildings, took with them wherever they went their ancient scripture, sacred scripts and separate liturgies founded in every city congregations with churches clergy and religious schools, traded across middle east used their wealth education and economic skills to offset their political powerlessness (Smith, 1999: 212).

Although Smith and many scholars point out to the significance of great epochs of Armenian kingdom, the interviewees mostly focused on the peaceful periods of their history and emphasized cultural, artistic and literal enrichments of the Armenian heritage during the Ottoman times. In accordance with these views, and as Ketchian also notes, the memories of Armenians mostly include themes like Armenians being happy people as well as Armenian unity and diligence, fertile Armenian soils and abundance, which is described as heaven (Ketchian in Özyürek, 2001 :133).

The above described golden age was usually interrupted by traumatic events, wars, deportations, and especially by betrayal of other Christian sects and by dispossession of homeland in the case of Armenians. Although dispossession of homeland is much more dominant in respondents narratives impact betrayal by other Christians and maltreatment of Armenians by other Christians is also felt in their narratives.

Dispossession of homeland after the collapse of the Armenian Arsacid kingdom (298) and the relocation of the Armenians in 1915 from Anatolia to the Ottoman district of Damascus are some of the examples which Smith describes as trauma. Smith adds that only a kind of partial restoration of that

trauma was achieved by the establishment of modern Armenia (Smith, 1999: 217). Although the respondents from the field directly or indirectly stated the issues of loss of homeland and memories about the 1915 events, the way of remembering their traumatic past radically diverged from the memories of Diaspora Armenians as transmitted in various sources. At this point, the categorization of Freud can serve to interpret the difference between the Turkish Armenians and Diaspora Armenians about how they remember their past. Freud differentiates between “mourning” and “melancholia” as different types of trauma. Mourning represents working through trauma by grieving the losses while melancholia is a repetitive attachment to losses. (Freud in Keshkegin, 2006: 110).

According to Keshkegin;

However effective mourning might be, more often than not, diasporan Armenians have neither done the work of mourning nor even recognized the irrecoverable wounding of the past. Rather they tried to deal with the past by resurrected and idealized memories of formal glory transplanted to the contemporary soil of nationalism (Keshkegin in Stier and Landres 2006: 110).

Keshkegin adds that “acknowledging the trauma and its losses, however, make a place for the losses; it allows the process of mourning to begin” (Keshkegin in Stier and Landres, 2006: 111). The data from the field which will be elaborated in detail in the next chapter signifies that this process of mourning is on the way for Turkish Armenians.

Lastly, ethno-symbolism is often criticized for overemphasizing the stability and persistence of ethnic cores, ethnic myths as well as ethnic solidarity. It is also claimed that it does not separate the terms nation, ethnic group, and ethnic category from one another. Thus, it is argued that it should

be evaluated as an alternative approach to ethnicity responding to a large extent to the need to comprehend the deep, complex and fluid nature ethnic identity (Özkırımlı, 2008: 229).

The theories and approaches discussed above about, ethnic identity evolves around the issues of persistence or fluidity of ethnic ties depending on agency or changing circumstances. These arguments can be labeled as middle way approaches to ethnicity. Nevertheless, the significance of interaction in the construction of ethnic identity and relations is not taken into account. In the next part of the chapter, constructivist approaches to ethnicity with special emphasis on Barth and Cohen will be discussed with reference to the concepts of boundary and community.

3.3. e. Social Constructivism: a multi-layered approach

According to Brubaker ethnicity can not be described within pre-determined categorizations. By his own words;

Ethnicity should not be conceptualized as substances or things or entities or organism within of discreet, concrete, tangible, bounded categories; this means that thinking ethnicity in terms of practical categories, situated actions, cultural idioms, cognitive schemas, discursive frames, contingent events (Brubaker, 2004: 11).

This argument refers to the necessity to reformulate or revise classical theories of ethnicity which fall short of explaining the emergent dynamics of ethnic relations. The constructivist position emphasizes the role played by the interaction of internal and external factors in shaping ethnic identity and it takes the process of construction of ethnicity as an ongoing process. It deals with the “other” and the “group” as separate categories and as dynamic actors

who play an active role in creating not only new identities, but also redefining the existing ones. For Nagel, “according to this constructivist view, the origin, content and form of ethnicity reflect the creative choices of individuals and groups as they define themselves and others in ethnic ways...Ethnicity is constructed out of material of language, religion, culture, appearance, ancestry or regionality” (Nagel, 1994: 152-153).

Social constructivist approaches are derived from important sociological arguments made by some influential theorists such as Weber, Mead, and Simmel and by symbolic interactionist view of the Chicago School sociologists. These traditions defined the foundations of constructivist approaches.

The basic point to mention about the influence of these traditions on the constructivist approach is the elements the constructivists inherited from their founding fathers. These are the subjective belief in ethnicity, the sense of belonging to a common descent, and shared culture as emphasized by the Weberian tradition as well as the Chicago School. Consequently, it should be said that social constructivism puts special emphasis on individual agency. A similar tendency pervades in the Chicago School theories. They treat the object of their research as free subjects capable of making rational decisions in their everyday conducts. That free subject enters in social contact that shape ethnicity. Social constructivists are even accused of emphasizing excessively the agency factor at the expense of structure. Nevertheless, theorist like Jenkins and Nagel focus not only on dialectical identification process of the self and other, but also on external factors shaping ethnic identity.

Another aspect of the heritage from Weber is the evaluation of ethnic groups as a kind of social closure device. Weber defines an ethnic group as closed social relations. It is “closed against the outsiders so far as, according to its subjective meaning and its binding rules, participation of certain persons is excluded or limited or subjected to conditions (Weber in Malesevic, 2004: 26). Such sense of belongingness to a group involves both a sense of solidarity with fellow group members as well as a sense of distance from outsiders. Brubaker renames this sense of solidarity as “groupness” and argues that groupness is a crucial term that should be used together with “commonness”, “relationality” and “connectedness” while analyzing ethnic groups (Brubaker, 2004:47). The meaning of all of these terms indicates similarities that bound the member of a group. Nevertheless, the process of being aware of similarities and differences necessitates the existence of the “other”. The description of an ethnic group by Chicago School sociologist Evert Hughes clarifies such necessity as,

An ethnic group is not one because of the degree of measurable or observable difference from other groups: it is an ethnic group, on the contrary, because the people in it and the people out of it know that it is one; because both the ins and the outs talk, feel, and act as if it were a separate group (Hughes in Jenkins, 1997:10).

Many clues of social constructivism are hidden in this description. One of the most important of these is the mutual formation of the categories of “us” and “them”. Evidently, this process has various stages influenced by many variables. Before social constructivism, Mead established the foundations of “ascription” and “assertion” by his theory of social action and his conceptualization of the “generalized other” (Mead in Malesevic, 2004: 64). Malesevic claims that “For Mead the self can only be complete when an

individual takes the attitudes of the organized social group to which that group is engaged” (Mead in Malesevic, 2004: 64). Thus, the adoption of the generalized other’s perception leads to the external and internal identification processes within a group. The data of this study also suggests that a collective definition of the community which includes positive or negative labeling also applies to the Armenian community. Simmel’s conceptualization of the stranger, where the stranger can be seen as a figure fostering the “us” and “them” distinction, appears to apply to the Armenian collective definition of themselves as will be discussed in the following section.

One point which needs to be underlined is that the groupness of an ethnic community could vary by means of cultural psychological raw materials, “mytho-moteurs”, as Smith calls it (1987). “Certain dramatic events can galvanize group feeling and produce a ratchet effect on pre-existing feelings of groupness (Laitin in Brubaker, 2004: 14). In the case of Armenian groupness in Turkey the assassination of Hrant Dink, which almost all of the respondents referred to, could be seen as a turning point in the perception of groupness among Armenian citizens. This tragic event created a sense of insecurity but at the same time augmented the degree of cohesion among the Armenian community as worded my most to the interviewees.

There may be shared understandings within an ethnic group, but it is difficult to see a consensus about the meaning and images associated with this particular ethnic identity. To give meaning to this variance in the process of identification constructivists claim that culture as one of the fundamental reference points or building blocks of ethnic identity should be highlighted. Jenkins defines culture together with ethnicity as such; “they are, rather,

complex repertoires which people experience, use or learn in their daily lives, within which they construct an ongoing sense of themselves and an understanding of their fellows (Jenkins, 1997: 14). It is made up of multiple practices including intellectual and cultural traditions. Hence, cultural experiences should not be accepted as a source necessarily producing some degree of homogeneity in within a group. As Bhabha argues, “No group culture is static and uni-dimensional; rather, it is always contested and in flux. Culture is also subject to processes of translation so, it is difficult to locate a stable essence of any one culture” (Bhabbha in Song p: 43). Following a similar perspective, Barth also rejects the view of ethnicity which stresses shared culture in favor of a relational approach emphasizing that feelings of communality are defined in opposition to the perceived identity of other ethnic groups (Lamant, Molnar, 2002: 174). Thus, fluidity and relationality as emphasized by Barth, brings the concept of boundary at the center of the discussion.

Before Barth, the term was used to symbolize social closure and isolation in the anthropological literature. After Barth published his work entitled, “Ethnic Groups and Boundaries” an interest in boundaries emerged including its content. In the following pages the concept of boundary and the arguments evolving around it will be evaluated further.

3.3. f. Boundaries: Filling the Shopping Cart

Barth proposes an interactionist version of the constructivist model of ethnicity. In his model he evaluates ethnicity as a social process and as an organizational form rather than a cultural given which is acquired than being

inborn and which is continuously formed and reformed along changing circumstances. In this respect, Barth rejects any one to one correspondence between culture and ethnicity and claims that while cultural traits change, traits of ethnic groups remain the same.

A similar tendency pervades in Nagel's arguments. According to Nagel, "It is important that we discard the notion that culture is simply an historical legacy; culture is not a shopping cart that comes to us already loaded with a set of historical cultural goods. Rather we construct culture by picking and choosing items from the shelves of the past and the present. In other words, cultures change; they are borrowed, blended, rediscovered and reinterpreted (Nagel, 2004:162). The field data indicates that although some of the cultural features such as language disappeared, the notion of being an Armenian in respondent's self-definition still stands. In other words, ethnic consciousness continues to persist at least in a symbolic way. Gans's symbolic ethnicity theory illustrates this account. Gans's defines symbolic ethnicity as, a kind of nostalgic adherence to the culture and tradition that can be felt which is not integrated daily life behavior (Gans in Hutchison and Smith, 1996: 146).

Similarly, in the study of Ann Bakhalian about Armenian Americans, symbolic ethnicity is described as feeling Armenian rather than being Armenian. In her words,

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 nevertheless they tend to uphold a strong Armenian heritage (Bakhalian in Cornell and Hartmann, 1998: 10).

Thus, despite the fact that they have a nostalgic feeling towards their culture, they do not incorporate it in their daily life. In case of Turkish Armenians the term “symbolic ethnicity” gains more significance for the young generation of the community. They were often accused of not engaging in cultural practices by their relatives. However, they still uphold a strong sense of Armenianness. In general, it would be appropriate to claim that a kind of balance is established between feeling and being Armenian. The issue will be elaborated further in the following chapter.

By positioning culture in a flexible ground, Barth defines ethnic identity with reference to oppositions among perceived identities instead of common features. These differences are objective differences but only those actors themselves regard them as significant. In Barth’s words, “Some cultural features are used by actors as signals and emblems of differences, others are ignored, and in some relationship radical differences are played down and denied” (Barth, 1969: 14). These differences may be evaluated as subjective characteristics defined through the interaction process with the “other”. What follows from this is that, Barth believes in the importance of self-definition and relative to the role of this self-ascription, also believes in the role of ascription of others play in the process of ethnic category formation. As Barth argues,

It makes no difference how dissimilar members may be in their overt behavior- if they say they are A, in contrast to the other cognate category B, they are willing to be treated and let their own behavior be interpreted and judged as A’s and not as B; in other words, they declare their allegiance to the shared culture of A’s (Barth, 1969: 15).

Following this point, the notion of “boundaries” as Barth describes could serve to elucidate these assumptions. Boundaries refer to the line of encounter between categories as well as types of behaving. To signify the limits of the boundaries, Barth uses the metaphor of “organizational vessel” within which may be given varying amounts and form of content in different socio-cultural systems (Barth, 1969:14).

In addition, Barth gives priority to the boundaries over cultural features by claiming that; “The critical focus of investigation from this point of view becomes the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it enclosed” (Barth, 1969: 15). Moreover, he accepts the existence of boundaries as a pre-requisite for the persistence of ethnic groups. In this respect, as ethnic boundaries that differentiate Armenians from other loosen, the sense of being Armenian also decreases. This was worded by most of the respondents, especially by ecclesiastics.

Besides serving to the continuation of ethnic groups, boundary displays a categorical, social or a behavioral dimension according to Barth. To put it differently, it determines membership and also organizes social life and the value judgments of the members of the group.” Claiming an ethnic identity implies being a certain kind of person, having that basic identity; it also implies a claim to be judged and to judge by those standards that are relevant to that identity” (Barth in Jenkins 1996: 94). It is possible to claim that in the Turkish Armenian case the boundaries usually shape reference points in the Armenians’ evaluation criteria about cultural, social, political or economic issues. In this study the Armenian perception about issues like inter-marriage, current events

such as Turkey's EU integration or the political conjecture in general will be evaluated within this perspective.

As mentioned before, the process of inclusion inevitably implies a process of exclusion and differentiating the other. These inclusion and exclusion mechanisms resulting from interaction provide in a way the persistence of these differences. Depending on Barthian approach, Jenkins claims that for the persistence as well as change of ethnic identity interaction across the boundary is a prerequisite. To put it differently, the dialectical process of collective identification with its internal and external moments had to work on for the maintenance and revision of ethnic identity (Jenkins, 1997: 95). In this respect, despite the process of acculturation and changing patterns of participation and membership during the interaction process, boundaries are sharply marked. Thus, ethnic categories are maintained. Such resistance which Barth ascribes to ethnic identity leads him to regard it as dominating most other statuses which determine social roles and relations among individuals. However, this is open to criticism since it denies the flexible and adaptable nature of identities. Despite the noticeable primacy of ethnic identity, varying circumstances could also change the sequence and intensity of identities. Handelman comments on this issue by claiming that ethnicity as religion, as class or as occupation is a lateral arrangement of categorical membership rather than a hierarchical one. Thus, it can be more important in one situation and less in the other (Handelman in Jenkins, 1997: 20-21).

Moreover, Barth evaluates the relationships between different groups in a poly-ethnic environment. After he lists the populations of groups and the degree of importance they attribute to ethnicity, he differentiates the value

standards as variables influencing the persistence of ethnic groups as well as the relationship between different groups (Barth, 1969: 17-18). According to this perspective, some analogies can be made about the case of Armenians. As claimed by Barth, on one hand difference of value standards between groups is a factor providing the persistence of ethnic boundaries of Armenianness and Turkishness. On the other, as long as the gap between the value standards among the Turks and Turkish Armenians is narrow, the differences will not lead to clashes. As members of a minority group, people avoid to behave against the value standards of the dominant community in order not to be excluded. A sense of silence about the past and not emphasizing and expressing openly the features of their identity in public domains can be mentioned as an attempt to be in line with dominant community. That mechanism of self- control of Armenians about self-expression will be evaluated in the next chapter of the study.

Besides, another aspect of limitation of self- expression is explained by Barth by means of population decrease. He claims that decline or increase in number of one of the ethnic groups in a territory had a big impact both the minor as well as the major group in a region. He claims that “migration and contest play an intermittent role in redistributing populations and changing their relations” (Barth, 1969: 21). The population decrease of Turkish Armenians due to many historical experiences has many economic, political as well as social reflections on the Turkish population as a whole. As mentioned in the narratives of respondents, migration to other countries as a result of economic factors and the political events such Capital Levy issue or attacks of Asala organization constitutes some examples of the causes of these variations

of relations as well as variation in identity boundaries. That point will be re-emphasized by meanings of respondent's experiences in the next part of the study.

Furthermore, inter group relations has an important impact on identity change as well. Especially mixed marriages, with is especially emphasized by the respondents of the study may be an important instrument of identity changes. Such behavior, described by Barth as crossing by ethnic boundary is defined as undesirable within the narratives of the study.

Another point in Barth's account of ethnicity, is, the response given to changing circumstances by minority ethnic groups. He argues that resistance of a minority ethnic identity against a dominant ethnic identity depends on the behaviors of others and possibilities or impossibilities, negative conditions offered by the dominant ethnic group to minority groups. So, the behaviors towards minorities as well as the opportunities offered to them and alternative identities, set of standards are available to them are determining identity change or persistence of individuals (Barth, 1969: 25).

It should be noted that group prejudice, emerging out of the socialization process and out of the orientation of political elites, may contribute to the identity change or maintenance. According to Maleseviç, since individuals tend to see other individuals as representative of their respective ethnic groups, group prejudice emerges as a symptom of changing positions between the superordinate and super ordinate position of the groups (Maleseviç: 2004, 67).

This argument appropriately fit with the historical events Armenians faced with. Besides many aspects of Barth's argument mentioned above, can

be used to illustrate the process of identity change among the Turkish Armenians. Although alternative identities were not overtly proposed or a total identity change was not worded, most of the respondents pointed to the necessity for an overarching ethnic identity. Rather than being named as Armenian most of the respondents prefer to be mentioned under the common citizenship category. They especially referred to the enlargement of their sphere of action claiming that minority groups were excluded from many. Especially, demands for new legal regulations about community institutions and foundations, churches, schools, about admission as public officers, are worded by almost all of the respondents during the study.

As mentioned above, existence or lack of such opportunities oriented individual's choices about group identity and lead them to develop some strategies. Barth distinguishes three strategies in order to express the choices made by minority groups. As Barth argues,

1. They may become attempt to pass and become incorporated in the pre-established industrial society and cultural group,
2. They may accept to a minority status, accommodate to and seek to reduce their minority disabilities by encapsulating all cultural differentiae in sectors of non-articulation, while participating in the larger system of the industrialized group in the other sectors of activity,
3. They may choose to emphasize ethnic identity, using it to develop new positions and patterns to organize activities in those sectors formerly not found in their society or developed for new purposes (Barth, 1969: 33).

Depending on these assumptions it may be said that Turkish Armenians embrace both the first and second type of strategies. That is, they try to be incorporated in the social structure without being assimilated. This issue will be further elaborated in the next chapter.

Lastly, Barth, by pointing out to the variability of belongingness, asks the question how some important cultural traits disappear and how others continue to survive. He points to prejudices for explaining this, but he does not clarify it further. The significance of primordial ties and historical continuity seem to fulfill the gap asked by Barth. In this context, Jenkins claims that Barth's recent arguments give more priority to the significance of history by emphasizing both its fluidity and stability. According to Jenkins, Barth defines history both as an ongoing process of events and a flow of tradition (Jenkins, 1997: 52).

Barth's theory is criticized by some other theorists of ethnicity. Although Barth gives extreme importance to the necessity of groupness when discussing ethnic identity, he seems to minimize the importance of common culture when defining an ethnic group. Handelman claims that

“Cultural stuff..... and ethnic boundary mutually modify and support one another. The former establishes and legitimizes the contrast of the boundary; while the latter, often in response to external conditions, modifies or alters the relevance to the boundary of aspects of the former” (Handelman in Jenkins, 1997: 20).

Following this argument Jenkins suggests that ethnic identity is made up by internal definitions as well and that at least a minimum level of shared cultural characteristics (Jenkins, 1994). This emphasis on culture is significant especially for minority groups. In the fieldwork of this study the significance of internalized culture was clear-cut and well formed as will be discussed in the following chapter.

To sum up, it should be said that despite some of these weaknesses of Barthian concepts, they serve to draw the framework of the thesis. Cohen's

analysis of communities as symbolic construction, which will be discussed below, complements the Barthian perspective since it emphasizes the cultural content of ethnic boundary construction.

3.3. g. Ethnic community as a symbolic construction

Although Cohen follows a Barthian perspective about the necessity of boundaries for the survival of a collective identity, he offers a new path for interpreting the survival of collective identities. Instead of naming a specific source of collective identity, Cohen takes the “community” as his central concept. As mentioned in the previous parts of the chapter, community is evaluated as a type of rural social organization of pre-modern times whose integrity can be undermined by external impacts stemming from structural transformations. Cohen rejects the idea of the decline of community. On the contrary he argues that community’s prime importance for its members persists. According to him, during periods of social change the community’s survival will depend on its member’s capability to preserve their distinctive features and affirm them (Day, 2006: 158). Besides, rather than seeing community as a social formation defined by structures and institutions, Cohen directs his attention inwards and focuses on the feelings and experiences of the members of a community and how they express themselves (Day, 2006: 158). Following this line of argument, he defines the notion of community as,

a highly symbolized mental construct whose members have something in common with each other which distinguished them in a significant way from the members of other putative groups....It is the area in which people acquire their fundamental and most substantial experience...In it they learn the meaning of kinship through being able to perceive its

boundaries...community is where one learned and practice how to be social...it is where one acquires culture (Cohen, 1985: 12).

Cohen attempts to uncover the reason behind the sense of belongingness felt by the members of a community. To understand the dynamics of belongingness, he investigates the meaning people ascribe to their community, which is one of the central themes of this study. In this context Cohen's definition of the concepts of community, boundaries, culture, and symbols and their intersection points will be discussed further below.

Firstly, Cohen accepts that boundaries are formed relationally and that they determine the end and the beginning of these communities. In other words, boundaries seem to encircle commonalities and also help the members of the community to affirm their differences against the others outside the community. In Cohen's words, "This consciousness of community is, then, encapsulated in perception of its boundaries, boundaries which are themselves largely constituted by people in interaction" (Cohen, 1985: 13). However, it is not the boundaries that give the sense of commonness to the community, but the culture shaped and reshaped by people. Cohen evaluates culture as a symbolic construct rather than a structural one (Cohen, 1975: 98). He claims that culture is like a web of significance where meaning is created and shared. This is the source of the sense of difference which forms people's awareness of their culture and which is an arena of distinctiveness (Cohen, 1975: 5).

In other words, culture which fulfills the boundaries of the community should not be taken as something commonly shared by the community. However, members of the community overemphasize their commonalities,

relatively define and redraw boundaries, and also define themselves by means of symbols and rituals.

Such tendency to overlook differences and emphasize similarities as a way to legitimize the existence of the community was also observed during the interviews with the informants of this study. The differences among the different communities in Turkey were not worded openly by the respondents. The respondents who did not share some of the ideas of the larger community felt obliged to say that these were their views and not the larger community's as will be discussed in the following chapter.

It could be said that this integrity within the community seems to be exaggerated in these claims. Nevertheless, Cohen does not equate commonalities with uniformity. What he describes is, "a commonality of ways of behaving rather than meanings" (Cohen, 1985: 20). He adds that, "the triumph of the community is to so contain this variety that its inherent discordance does not subvert the apparent coherence which is expressed by its boundaries" (Cohen, 1985: 20).

According to Cohen, what lead to that discordance are the different meanings members ascribe to general symbols by using the platform of a common culture. He points out that "Symbols, then, do more than merely stand for or represent something else". He adds that "They also allow those who employ them to supply part of their meaning "(Cohen, 1985: 14).

Following this argument it should be noted that the field work has proven such diversity in making meaning from the same symbolic practices. The flexibility of symbols provides opportunities for co-existence of

differences within the same community. The interviewees perceive the concepts of homeland, minority, language, and citizenship diversely according to their personal experiences. However, they also have a common understanding about the boundaries of being members of the Armenian community in Turkey.

In this context, Cohen points out that rituals occupy a crucial place in the symbolic constituents of the community through which boundaries of the community are re-expressed (Cohen, 1985: 50). The emphasis on religious rituals by almost all of the respondents regardless of their religiosity may be considered as a clue for the power rituals which aggregates the Armenian community. Also, Cohen, similar to Smith's argument, claims that myths which are selective recreation of the past are highly symbolized resources for the maintenance of boundaries. Members of the community define themselves by means of these symbolic resources which reconstructs the past of the community by blocking some parts and legitimizing selected others (Cohen, 1985: 99).

Another argument made by Cohen is that symbols shared by the members of the community while opening a space for its members to live their individuality freely, also provides the maintenance of the distinctiveness of that community. However, the coexistence of communality and individuality is debatable. This is because the respondent's arguments have shown that although in some cases boundaries appeared to be blurred, e.g. mixed marriages, people had difficulty in reconciling communality with individuality as will be discussed in the following chapter.

Depending on that Cohen relates the increasing importance of symbolic construction of community and its boundaries with the blurring of geographical boundaries. Armenian case in İstanbul seems working in the opposite direction. Armenians living in specific districts have more opportunity to deal with symbolic practices and relatively to re-construct Armenian community.

On the other hand, Cohen argues that due to the industrialization, mass production, centralization of markets, spread of mass media and increased mobility, it became hard to preserve and re-construct communal boundaries. By his own words, “but this homogeneity may be merely superficial, a veneer which masks real and significant differences at the deeper level” (Cohen, 1985: 44). Such superficiality and modification of communal bounds due to changing daily life is perceived and worded as well during the interviews.

Lastly, it can be said that Cohen offers a multi-layered approach to analyze how a shared sense of belonging is established within the community. Besides accepting the relationality of boundaries, he basically focuses on the inner side of boundaries to investigate the cohesion shaped by emphasized communalities rather than de-emphasized differences. While trying to reconcile *Gemeinschaft* and *Geiselshaft* in the modern period, he aims to illustrate the symbolic construction of community by means of myths, rituals, and ceremonies.

In the next chapter, Armenian identity in Turkey will be analyzed by means of self-perception of the Armenians who live in Yeşilköy, İstanbul.

During the study, primordial as well as constructed aspects of Armenian identity will be evaluated in light of the ethnicity theories discussed above with special emphasis on Smith's ethno-symbolist approach and Barth and Cohen's social constructivist approach.

CHAPTER 4

HOMELAND, COMMUNITY, POLITICS

The Armenians living in İstanbul are usually taken as a uniform group. However, in reality they form a heterogenous group gathered in İstanbul as a result of various migratory waves. Except a small number of Armenians who are of İstanbul origin, the majority have migrated to İstanbul from various Anatolian cities such as Bitlis, Malatya, Van, Konya, Kayseri, Kastamonu, Yozgat, Tokat, Sivas in different time periods. This second group is referred to as Anatolian origin Armenians while the first are called as İstanbul origin Armenians. İstanbul as one of the centers of Armenian dispersion aggregated people with different traditions who share similar life experiences and who are named as İstanbul Armenians.

Bakırköy, especially its districts Yeşilköy, Şişli, Kumkapı, and Kınalıada are some of places where most of the İstanbul Armenians are located. This chapter includes the analysis of the findings from the field study conducted in Yeşilköy. Yeşilköy is one of the regions of İstanbul where most of the Armenians are populated. The layers of Armenian identity in İstanbul are complex. This chapter will analyze the basis and constituents of Armenian identity and its reconstruction through the perceptions of the Armenians who were interviewed in İstanbul during the summer of 2010. Historical and

symbolic heritage as well as political and social experiences of the respondents will be taken as the source material of this study to explain their perceptions of homeland, history, Armenian community, other communities and the state. This discussion will provide clues not only about how the minorities are perceived in Turkey, but also how they perceive the larger society and their own status.

4.1. Homeland, Past, Memory

Besides holding a common ethnic heritage, the past also constitutes an important resource for construction and reconstruction of ethnic identity. The Armenian community's perception of homeland, trauma and migration reflect their relations with their past. These concepts will be elaborated below with reference to the views worded by the Armenians who live in İstanbul.

Homeland as a piece of land where a people lives or have historical ties with is a primary source of identification for a community of nation according to Smith. He used the term poetic landscape or ethno-scape to label the landscape which constitutes a part of collective memory of the group. With the cultural, historical and emotional references it is associated with it preserves the continuity of the population. It is not matter whether the group lives or used to live in these lands (Smith, 1999: 150).

Following this definition it can be argued that, for Armenians in İstanbul, homeland was not perceived at first as İstanbul. Nearly all of the respondents whether they were born in İstanbul or not, defined Anatolia as

their homeland. As one of the interviewees said, “The homeland of Armenians is already Anatolia. They settled there after the conquest of İstanbul by Fatih Sultan Mehmet. İstanbul Armenians were constituted more by an elite group who charged in the Ottoman palace.” Most of the members of that elite group, as claimed by the respondents, migrated from İstanbul and those who lived in Anatolia come to İstanbul after 1915, which was the year the Armenians in Anatolia were relocated to the Ottoman district of Damascus, i.e. the time when they were deported from Anatolia. This is the reason for the difficulty when categorizing the Armenians as İstanbul origin Armenians or Anatolian origin Armenians.

Most of the respondents, except two of them originated from İstanbul, claimed that the Armenians rather than being a uniform community in İstanbul possess various Anatolian traditions within. On the one hand being from İstanbul was associated with being urbanized, but on the other hand it was considered as being degenerated. Thus, İstanbul includes both positive and negative connotations for most of the respondents. Two of the respondents whose ancestors were artisans in the Ottoman palace felt a kind of pride about being İstanbul origin Armenians and made a kind of distinction between themselves and Anatolian Armenians. Others on the other hand mentioned with honor the impurity of Anatolian origin Armenians and showed deep attachment to the traditions Anatolian Armenians have. Most of the interviewees did not consider İstanbul as their homeland; they referred to Anatolia as their homeland. Based on these points, it should be pointed out that being born and living in Anatolia or İstanbul shapes to a great extent their historical experiences and

understanding of the past among the members of the Armenian community. Thus, there were differences in their narratives about themselves and about their status in Turkey.

In most of the narratives the respondents claimed that they feel disturbed when someone treats them as the “other” in their own homeland. The narrative of the seventy one year old director of a foundation is interesting to note,

Two years ago I went to Sivas, to the village where I was born. There at the coffee house, one man, a Balkan immigrant, who had heard before that I am Armenian said to me you are our guest. Man to man I asked him why he said me that I was his guest. I said you are my guest; I was born in Sivas, Ulaş as was my grand-father and his grand-father. You are a guest here, not me (Respondent A).

Two other interviewees worded the same situation by saying,

We love these lands; we always say this is our land. For instance, my ancestors migrated from Erzurum to Yozgat and then to İstanbul. We will never leave these lands (Respondent E).

We are the branches of a tree detached from its roots. We blossomed again in İstanbul (Respondent F).

Relative to the last claim, İstanbul was seen as one of the few places in Turkey where the Armenian could live happily since İstanbul was perceived as a result multicultural city with many different communitarian bounds. Besides, Anatolia was seen as a source creating solidarity bonds among the Armenian community. However, all of the respondents, whether originated from İstanbul or Anatolia, projected their sense of belongingness to the place where they now lived, that is to İstanbul. It symbolizes an area of reconciliation where Armenian culture is tried to be re-flourished. One of the phrases mostly

mentioned by the respondents was “if I was born once again, I would want to live here, not in another place” (Respondent R). Another respondent born in Kastamonu narrated his story as such,

In 1977, my father gained a big amount of money from the lottery and decided to move to Europe for a while, but at the end of three months, he decided to return back to Turkey and the first thing he did at the airport was to kiss the ground (Respondent H).

These strong ties with territory suggest that Anatolia is a place of origin which has been historicized. Smith claims that land, natural features of the lands like rivers, mountains, fields and historical features like monuments or churches has always become part of community’s history and that Armenian history sees Anatolian lands as part of Armenian homeland (Smith, 2003: 134). Similar to Smith’s account, in the narratives, the interviewees emphasis on historical territories and natural features like Ani region, Mount Ararat, historical monuments and especially churches, geographical conditions for the survival of ancient communities, notable people, as well as resting places of ancestors. These details signal that the land was turned into a kind of “ethnoscape” or “poetic landscape” where a sense of belongingness is established between the land and the people. Anatolia as an ancestral homeland is a cradle for Armenian ethnic identity as well as for Armenian civilization. Parallel to his argument, most of the respondents highlighted the artistic, literary, and political contributions the Armenians made in Anatolia and vice versa. As one interviewee worded,

There were lots of Armenian churches, schools in Anatolia. Most of the magnificent monuments you come across in Anatolia are constructed by Armenian architects. The most

famous ones are Balyan Brothers, Mimar Sinan, who were chief architects of the Ottoman Palace (Respondent I).

Such a strong attachment to Anatolian lands is associated with history, which constitutes the basic resource for the accumulation of materials for Armenian collective memory. Following Smith's definition (2003: 170), Armenian collective memory is "territorialized" around the lands of Anatolia. In other words, territory together with the historical past paves way to the formation of an alternative history, a collective way of remembering supported by various narratives and myths. Eller (1999: 41) describes this process as following,

Rather ethnic past-as-myth is a complex and empirically (i.e, case-by-case) specific amalgamation of remembering, forgetting, interpreting and inventing. Some events must have transpired to provide the grist for the mythical mill, but not all parts of these events are necessarily preserved in present-day ethnic memory.

The respondents especially originated from Anatolia were well informed about their alternative histories which can be named as ethno-history. The sources of myths which Smith focuses on in his study entitled *Chosen Peoples* (2003) were repeated in the narratives of the respondents. Being one of the oldest nations in history, being the first nation who adopted Christianity, being one of the members of a grandiose civilization in Anatolia, and being an urban sedentary population was the most commonly repeated themes that the respondents referred to. In some of their claims the period before Christianity was also mentioned to emphasize the deep-rooted nature of the civilization. In this context it was claimed that the Armenians had a grandiose past and that

they were composed of different races such as Nairi, Aram and Hayasa, which appeared to be a source of pride.

However, a couple of respondents mentioned the traits of the ancient belief system, Zoroastrianism, which was practiced before Christianity. Besides holding some of the cultural traits of this traditional belief system, Christianity dominates as the basis of the very strong bonds among the Armenians. In other words, it appears to be protector of their historical heritage. This applies most to the Armenian Church which is the oldest (The Armenian Apostolic). As the first Christian nation in history, the Church gives an ethno-religious character to their myths. These myths together with the ethno-religiosity as mentioned above are the key elements which give a distinctive character to the narratives of the respondents. For example, it was argued that,

We are one of the populations who boated with Noach's ark and arrived to Nakhchivan. As the first Christian nation, Christianity and Armenianness are closely associated; we cannot separate one from the other. Nationality and religion are of course different, but we all embrace religion and try to maintain Christianity more ardently than other nations. We never make concessions about our religion (Respondent I).

Ethno-religiosity is also harmonized with the Armenian alphabet. The translation of the Bible and the study of sacred texts was an important tool for enrichment of myths and memories. This linguistic distinctiveness was usually referred to by the respondents as follows,

The foundation of Armenian Alphabet in 406 prevented the disintegration of the Armenian community within the Roman Empire. Otherwise we could easily be assimilated within the empire because despite the strength of our culture, the environment of these times was so open to interaction that it was easy to be assimilated (Respondent J).

Besides some of the myths about a heroic and sacred past from ancient periods, memories occupy a bigger place in the collective remembering of the respondents. Some of the memories of the 1915 relocation are also turned into myths which were transmitted from one generation to another. This is particularly true for the respondents from Eastern Anatolia whose ancestors were affected by the 1915 relocation. For instance, the mother of a thirty five year old woman narrated the life history of a man who managed to survive through the relocation in a miraculous way. While she was telling the story her sister and daughter completed the missing parts. Such transmission of history was more visible in the case of memories, particularly the memories about the 1915 events. This transmission serves to establish the link between the past and present through emphasizing and legitimizing the sense of belongingness to the soil. It also strengthens social cohesion by means of highlighting commonalities and distinctiveness.

Some of the concepts and events dominate the repertoire of the memories of the respondents. The *millet* system of the Ottoman Empire, Armenians being defined as the *millet-i sadıka* (the loyal nation) in the Ottoman society, the 1915 relocation, migration of the Armenians, capital levy, and the events of September 6-7 were some of the themes that were emphasized in the narratives of the respondents.

Rather than mentioning a specific period of a golden age, the respondents referred to Anatolia as a way of life where people from different cultures coexisted in harmony. Memories from the Ottoman period with an emphasis on the public offices Armenians occupied, important artists, writers,

and musicians who served for the Ottoman civilization, and being the *millet-i sadıka* of the empire were also narrated with a kind of nostalgia. This suggests that a selection of certain time periods and some memories form the basis of Armenian collective remembering. For example, one of the anecdotes that a trader from the Grand Bazaar narrated highlights the importance Ottoman sultans attributed to the Armenian community. As worded by the trader,

Berberiyan effendi was an important person who owned private schools. Sultans sent their sons to these schools. There is an anecdote. One day one of the princes behaved impolitely to Beberiyani effendi and made him angry. Berberiyani slapped right in his face. Then the prince complained to his father. The sultan approved what Berberiyani did and told his son to go back to Berberiyani and turn the other side of his face so he would slap him again (Respondent I).

Another point frequently mentioned by the respondents was the peaceful atmosphere in the society although the Ottoman Empire was based on a religious division. This was narrated by their ancestors and passed to younger generation. Nearly one third of the interviewees claimed that this peaceful atmosphere was disturbed by other groups, mostly by the Jews, Kurds or European Powers. It was argued that especially Jewish people are responsible for the degrading relations between the Armenians and Ottomans. “They even corrupted the *devshirme* system (a system of recruitment of young boys to be trained as military officers applied in Ottoman Empire) and trade relations” claimed one of the respondent. (Respondent K).

Smith, besides focusing on memories of a golden age, analyzed the role trauma played for Armenian identity. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Christianity became as a source of pride and comfort in darker times for

Armenians, as claimed by Smith (2003:69). This was mostly encountered in their memories about 1915 and the Capital Levy as well as in their memories about some other important political events. Although the dispersion which was caused by the 1915 relocation created a sense of dispossession of ancestral homelands, some of the respondents in İstanbul remembered these lands as their homeland. Thus, the place of origin creates a clear-cut distinction among the respondents in terms of their perception of a homeland. Few of the respondents who were İstanbul origin or Central Anatolia origin did not have too many memories about the relocation. However, they have heard some stories from their elders, from family members or from community members. As opposed to these people those who migrated from Eastern Anatolia appeared to have deeper memories about the 1915 events and they recalled these memories frequently with a sense of melancholia.

Pain, loss of roots due to migration, dispersion of family members, missing, destruction of a multi-cultural environment where there were good relationship with neighbors from other religions, and those good Muslims who helped them to survive were the major themes mentioned by the respondents when commenting about the relocation. Some of these were constantly repeated when talking about their memories of a later period too. The respondents were asked if they would transfer these stories to the younger generations. Few of them claimed that they would transfer these memories to the young generation since they thought that it was essential for cultural survival. However, they also noted that they did not want to create any kind of hostility between Turks and Armenians. As worded by one interviewees,

To be honest, I will transfer these memories to my children because they are our cultural heritage. It doesn't matter how people name these events. We experienced the results. Thus, we will transmit them to the next generations, but I don't want my children to be hostile towards the people of this country. These events were not their fault; these events were the result of some political decisions (Respondent E).

Words of another respondent were like an evaluation of this melancholia and its deep impact on their personal lives, which is one of the markers of Armenian identity, "Despite the richness of its culture, large part of our memories is full of literature about pain. You can notice this point, even from the words I use while I am talking to you" (Respondent B). Others who did not want to maintain this oral tradition claimed that, "It is not necessary to make the wound bleed again because we still live together....The past is over, the issue is to reconstruct a better future" (Respondent H).

The strategy labeled by Freud as "mourning the trauma" (Freud in Keshkegin, 2006:110), is best illustrated by the narrative of an ecclesiastic,

There is a kind of soreness among the people from both sides. This is not easy to cure. Oral traditions exist in both sides...The issue is not to reconstruct memories, but to evaluate the events objectively. Mutual understanding among the people can be achieved (Respondent D).

In the literature on relocation the sense of belongingness and love for a homeland, and bitter experiences like deportation are discussed as important sources for the process of identity making. The informants of this study also enrich their collective memory by establishing a link between the members of their community. During the interviews the respondents mentioned many literary works which had to be read before evaluating the events they experienced. For example, relocation from their homeland is not the only event

in the collective remembering of the Armenians. The Capital Levy, the events of September 6-7, and the ASALA period are the other crucial events which the Armenians remember collectively. The respondents mostly read stories about these events from primary sources and from their first degree relatives. With regard to the Capital Levy, visible loss of economic power was mentioned by some of the respondents. For example, an artisan said,

The family of my husband was very rich before the Capital Levy. They lived in İstanbul, in a big chalet. With the imposition of the tax they lost all of their properties. His father was send to Aşkale and after he returned, he had to start all over to support this family (Respondent L).

Another respondent claimed that,

In times of Capital Levy my Agop grandfather, coming from Merzifon, a college graduate, speaking four five languages, and who survived the deportation could not send his children to school. Can you imagine? This man was subscribed to two magazines coming from the US. He attracted too much attention. Thus, he was taxed a big amount of money, 8,000 Turkish Liras. He had to sell all of his properties, even the last bath vessel he made (Respondent B).

Considering these events as a kind of punishment for attracting too much attention and seeing them as a result of envying their properties was a common attitude. Similar to the memories of relocation, most repeated themes about the events of September 6-7. They referred to Turkish people or to their relatives who protected them from attacks. As worded by one of the interviewees,

They used to call Kumpkapı little Armenia. We were not injured thanks to our neighbor. He put his chair in front of our door and told the people who were going to attack our house that this was a house of a Muslim and he swore on the Koran. Although our house was on the list they believed him and they didn't enter to our house. We are all alive thanks to our neighbor (Respondent N).

Another respondent also claimed that,

My father tells us that a man with a walrus mustache who had a revolver and a big knife, holding a Turkish flag in his hand, was standing at the corner of the street to stop the attackers to enter the street where we used to live. He remembers that man with gratitude (Respondent J).

Nearly all of the respondents told very similar stories about the events of September 6-7. These suggest that the respondents had a tendency to evaluate these events as a consequence of uncontrolled group psychology and did not see it as an organized crime against them. They emphasized the necessity to discuss these events by taking into consideration that they were conducted by a group the people agitated by the political atmosphere of the time. In this context it was claimed that,

It is so strange, we lived together in same streets, same apartments. Suddenly one saved the other's daughter; the other hid another's children. We know that these people had nothing to do with these events. But how could this be possible? I really can't understand (Respondent M).

Another point to be mentioned is the ASALA problem. It was claimed that the crimes of ASALA created an insecure atmosphere and forced some of the İstanbul origin Armenians to migrate to foreign countries.

Besides these historical events, there were diverse views about some important figures like Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, Fevzi Çakmak and İnönü, two of Atatürk's commanders during the War of Independence. Nearly half of the respondents referred to Atatürk with respect and valued Kemalism. Some of them told stories about the relationship Atatürk established with Armenian artists, man of letters, and musicians. In these narratives they also emphasized the contributions made by the Armenians to

the newly established republic. One of the interesting stories was about a man, Agop Baltayan Dilaçar, who played a key role during the development of the Turkish alphabet. As claimed by a respondent,

He was often invited to Atatürk's dinner table. One day Atatürk asked him which surname he would want to have after the alphabet revolution and offered him to take the surname Dilaçar since he was developing the language for the Turkish people. In turn, Agop Dilaçar offered him to take the surname Atatürk (Respondent I).

Similarly the person who formulated the first musical notation system, Hamparsum, and the musician who made the orchestration of the Turkish national anthem, Edgard Manas, was mentioned in the same manner. Remembering these people not only as a cultural heritage, but also as a source of honor reflects a kind of nostalgia to the past and also a sense of togetherness.

Together with Atatürk, Fevzi Çakmak and İnönü are important persons in the memories of the Armenians. İnönü is remembered as responsible for the dramatic events that occurred as a result of the Capital Levy. Especially the narrative of an ecclesiastic about recruitment to the army during the Capital Levy period, known as the Incident of Reserve (*Yirmi Kura Askerlik*), is worth mentioning,

Do you know why a photograph of Fevzi Çakmak was hung in all Armenian houses until thirty years ago? Incident of Reserve whose architect was Ismet İnönü aimed the destruction of non-Muslim people during military service. However, by Fevzi Çakmak's command they were all saved. Ask why a state ceremony didn't take place in his funeral? It's really interesting. These events really constructed our identity and some of us like me became much more politicized by hearing stories like this.

Despite the importance of these stories in shaping Armenian identity, transmission of the number of narratives to the next generation appears to be

decreasing. The narratives even turned into humoristic anecdotes that are told to make fun of their history. One of the respondents narrated a story claiming that it was humorous and frequently told among the community members,

In times of Capital Levy, three Armenians working in Askhale quit their job. When they were left with no food, they looked for it in the nearest village. The muhtar (official heads of villages) arrested and searched them when they arrived to the village. A report was written saying that three men from the gavur (infidel) troops came to the village, and that they were arrested and searched. It was soon understood that they left their troop to search for some food. Then one officer asked their name. The first said Agop, the second Aurat, and the third Ağaro... The officer slapped the third one on the face and said how can a gavur can be an ağa (meaning chief or master) (Respondent I).

That tendency to have fun with past events can be considered as a way of dealing with painful memories or as a kind of re-assertion of belongingness to the community. Although myths and memories continue to shape Armenian identity, the intensity of each memory varies. Moreover, a kind of selection was made; painful memories were not narrated so frequently. That tacit behavior may be seen as a reflection of the sense of being minority as well as the wish to maintain continuity of their identity without being ruptured by a trauma. Besides, in daily life routine, daily life anxieties pre-dominates people's mind. As mentioned by many respondents, "No one has a time to deal with these painful memories or dolorous stories. We work for our bread and butter, that's all".

However, the women emphasized inter-generational transmission of oral traditions more than men did. They also stressed the importance of religiosity and language as will be analyzed in the next section. Some of the women described this as a responsibility towards their children and community

while others considered it as a burden on the shoulders of Armenian women. Also, the birth place, age, personal experiences more or less define the content of myths and memories that are remembered and told by the members of the Armenian community. Thus, in spite of the fact that, a harmony may more or less be perceived within the narratives, while some of the respondents were more neutral when talking about their experiences, other took a more radical stand.

To sum up, apart from the primary homeland, “the ethno-space” of Armenians; Anatolia, the concept of homeland has many strata for the Armenians. Respondents enlarge the boundaries of their homeland as İstanbul, and Turkey as well while comparing with Armenia and diaspora as well. The memories of ancestral homeland Anatolia are carried out by narratives of elder people, by Armenian literature within the socialization process. Despite the varying degree, idealization of natural features, myth of being the “Chosen People”, sacred monuments, multicultural atmosphere in which people lives together with the painful memories of 1915 are part of collective memory of the respondents. That recollection of a shared past may serve as a bridge associating past with future and as may be used a map orienting the present. Besides 1915, Capital Levy, Incidence Reserves, 6-7 September, ASALA events constitutes other darker memories shaping the ethnic identity of Armenians. These collective traumas may strengthen or weaken community bounds and identity according to Erikson (in Smelser, 2004: 44). On one hand, the co-existence of territorialized collective memories including collective traumas and the sense of attachment to the land may seem like a controversy.

On the other hand, narratives indicates that, together with the scars it had left on the new generation who has not experienced it, 1915, as a collective trauma, has a solidifying impact on Armenian identity of the respondents rather than being a disrupting one. Although it was not expressed openly like a discourse of victimization by most of the respondents as in case of diaspora for whom victimization is a basic marker of identity, it opens a field of identification.

Together with myths, memories and sense of belongingness to the land living in communal attempts to survive Armenian traditions were exercised and referred by the respondents. In the next part of the chapter, these attempts to maintain such identification will be evaluated by means of respondents' narratives.

4.2. Community: Commonness and Differences

Most of the definitions of ethnic groups emphasize culturally distinct segments of ethnic groups as well as common practices based on common culture (Yinger 1994; Schermerhorn 1970; Cohen 1969; Smith 1991). Cultural aspect of ethnic groups with its daily life practices constitutes most visible part of ethnic identity. Also, as emphasized by the interviewees, culture is a touchstone for their Armenianness together with narratives about historic homelands. After mentioning the importance of the past, myths and memoirs for the continuation of Armenian identity, the "cultural stuff" (Barth, 1969: 15) of the Armenian community will be elaborated by means of the respondents perceptions.

Komşuoğlu argues that "Armenian culture is not homogeneous. It has a synthetic nature and carries the marks of Turkish, Greek, Arabic, Assyrian,

Roman, and Kurdish cultures which have been dominant in Anatolian lands in different time periods for centuries” (Komşuoğlu 2009: 331).

Similarly, the respondents described Anatolian culture as the basis of Armenian culture together with other cultures. In this sense they referred to a kind of hybrid culture when defining their own. As worded by a couple of interviewees:

Anatolian culture is like a table full of delicious foods, like a big forest including different flowers (Respondent P).

There is no difference between Anatolian Turks and Armenians in terms of their culture. Similar stories of villages; child brides, man working in low-wage jobs in cities, similar patriarchal way of life...Same cultural structure...I don't see so many differences between our culture and the one called Anatolian culture. Turkish culture, Armenian culture and Greek culture are all mixed up in these lands (Respondent C).

The culture of Armenians from eastern Anatolia is similar to that of Kurds. They are defined as Kurdish Armenians within our community as a joke (Respondent E).

Many traditions are transferred from Turks to Armenians in Anatolia. For instance, it was forbidden to sacrifice animals in Christian tradition, but when we lived in Malatya, we practiced such tradition which we learned from our neighbors. In Anatolia cultures are integrated; Muslim and Armenian culture are integrated (Respondent Z).

Relationships resulting by integration of cultures will be re-emphasized in the following pages of this chapter. Besides such similarities occurring as a result of the interaction of different cultures, boundaries of Armenianness appears to be guarded by the maintenance of some distinctive features about Armenian culture. Depending on that, respondents were asked to mention some of the elements which seem primary for Armenian culture. In turn, they responded that they do not struggle to maintain their cultural elements; some of

them are kept alive and some others are forgotten. This opinion can be explained according to various factors such as the political environment in Turkey, relations with other groups, and the ideas of community leaders.

As features which are still alive, most of the respondents emphasized religion, language and alphabet, food culture, and artistic features like music, literature, handcraft, and folkloric dances.

First of all, as one of the most repeated constituents of Armenian “cultural stuff”, religion has to be mentioned. Encloe focuses on the role played by religion in the integration of ethnic boundaries and in maintaining the integrity of group. According to her, religion “as part of ethnic group’s communal package will determine how porous ethnic boundaries are, how capable a group is of withstanding outside pressures to assimilate and how prone the group will absorb outsiders through intermarriage or conversion ” (Encloe in Smith and Hutchinson: 1996: 198). In this context Armenian ethno-religiosity appears to be a good example for Encloe’s definition. As the first nation in history who adopted Christianity, Armenianness is largely shaped by the Apostolic Church as well as Christianity. Besides, during the Ottoman period, the social organization of the society which was based on religious categories contributed to the growing importance of religion within the Armenian community. Religion and especially the Church provided a common ground for the Armenians to feel a sense of belongingness to their community. Even the self-labeling of the respondents showed how Christianity is intertwined with Armenian ethnic identity. Many respondents expressed their ethnicity and religion as if they were inseparable. In other words, to be born as

an Armenian was equated with being born as a Christian. A thirty-seven year old woman worded this connectedness as such,

Armenianness and Christianity are interrelated. Thus, the Church is at the center of our lives. All of our schools are built near to our Churches. Whether we are religious or not, Churches are important places for our identity. All children know that they will marry at a Church and we look forward to marrying there. We all have our favorite Churches where we want to marry or baptize our children. Even for our funerals. We all have family cemeteries where we will be buried at. So, I think a kind of solid integration exists between Christianity and Armenian identity (Respondent F).

As reflected in the above narration, religiosity or reference to religion as an indispensable part of everyday life is an important indicator of Armenian identity. Although the scale of religiosity of the respondents was wide and it was claimed that there was a considerable decrease in the number of visits to the Churches for worshiping and rituals such as funeral, marriage ceremonies and religious feasts, religion appears to preserve its importance in the daily lives of the Armenians.

The younger respondents claimed that although they do not visit the Church for worshiping either because of their daily routine or because they are not religious people, they all attend religious ceremonies or feasts such as marriage, baptizing or funerals. They also accomplish traditions such as painting Easter eggs, cooking traditional foods for religious feasts (e.g. hot cross buns), visiting family members during religious feasts, and holding the cross (holding cross, crossing oneself). These shared rituals can be seen as signs of “symbolic ethnicity” which could anyhow persist for generations (Gans in Hutchinson and Smith 1996: 152-154). Gans claim that “they do not take much time, do not upset the everyday routine, and also became an

occasion for reassembling on a regular basis family members who are rarely seen” (Gans in Sollors 1996: 436). A similar point was mentioned by one of the respondents,

I do not go to the Church so often. In marriage ceremonies, feasts only...As we do not have a legal day off in our religious holidays, many things have to be done on special days. I like these kinds of events because it gives us the opportunity to meet with family and community members (Respondent B).

For instance, in Eastern Dinners, whether religious or not, everyone comes together. Some people may be more conscious about the meaning of traditions, some but not all continue to crack Easter eggs dyed in red at the Resurrection Table (Respondent J).

The above mentioned religious symbols are flexible and could have different meanings for different individuals. As Cohen argues, “Symbols are effective because they are imprecise, they are therefore ideal media through which people can speak a common language and behave in apparently similar ways, participate in the ‘same’ rituals, pray to the ‘same’ gods, wear similar clothes, and so forth, without subordinating themselves to a tyranny of orthodoxy. Individuality and commonality are thus reconcilable (Cohen, 1985: 21). In other words, although people attribute different meanings to these symbolic practices, they are part of the same symbolic environment and they create a sense of belongingness. Thus, these practices can be seen as a re-affirmation of ethnic boundaries. The narration below is an example of such variance,

I have been driving over the last thirteen years. I have never started driving before I put my cross on. I haven’t had an accident in all these years and since then, I believe that the cross protects me from accidents (Respondent U).

I haven’t even thought about marrying a Muslim man. I dream about marrying in a Church. Although I would not prefer to

marry a Muslim man, I may consider it only if he accepts to marry me in a Church (Respondent U).

I love participating to ceremonies; they are special even though I don't understand what the ecclesiastic is narrating. But it makes me feel peaceful. However, I don't even think about going to a Church for prayers (Respondent M).

Gans examines the Jews in America and refers to the reasons behind the religious awareness mentioned above. He claims that the Jews from older generations were living and working in the same place; thus, they felt no necessity to reaffirm their ethnic identity. However, the situation changed with the younger generations (Gans in Sollors 1996: 443). Similarly for Cohen,

as the structural bases of boundary become blurred, so the symbolic bases are strengthened through 'flourishes and decorations', and aesthetic frills and so forth (Cohen 1985: 44).

Similar changes occurred in Armenian community in İstanbul. As the number of the members of the community decreased in time, as younger generations had to begin to work in the private sector rather than family businesses, and as the number of intermarriages between Christians and Muslims increased, symbolic ethnicity became much more practicable. In this context it is possible to argue that increasing number of intermarriages between the Armenians and Turks influences the perceptions of the Armenians of their ethnic identity. Intermarriages are usually considered as a threat against the maintenance of ethnic boundaries which keeps different communities apart from one another. During the field work the attitudes of the respondents towards intermarriage was asked. More than half of the respondents had a negative look on marriages from outside of community. It was noticeable that Christianity which is inseparable from Armenian identity is also seen as a barrier for mixed marriages as claimed by Encloe. She argues that "the most

common way of rendering the extent to which religion sustains ethnic boundaries operative in the study of ethnicity has been to focus on rates of *intermarriage* which is, in a sense, the ‘bottom line’ of ethnicity” (Encloe in Smith 1996: 199). However, some of the respondents were very sensitive about intermarriage. As a couple of them worded,

I don’t want my daughter to marry someone outside of Armenian community. It does not make much difference whether she marries with a Turk or French. The basic thing for me is the maintenance of Armenian culture because a child can only learn the Armenian language, Armenian culture within the family (Respondent E).

In my opinion people from the same religion and culture should marry. Because in the future there will always be some problems, at least in terms of raising children. Christianity and Islam have different requirements. There is an Italian proverb saying that find a girl from your own hometown to marry (Respondent I).

Mixed marriages are more common among those families who don’t provide their children with the necessary religious information. These people don’t act rationally about mixed marriages (Respondent G).

The main reason for this negative attitude about mixed marriages is the decline of Armenian population in Turkey. As a considerable number of the Armenian population emigrated from İstanbul, endogamy is seen as the only way to protect the population from further decline. Consequently, the way children are brought up gains more significance. Respondents were cautious about the acculturation process of those who were born from a mixed marriage. As two of the interviewees worded,

It is very difficult to get on well with each other. People usually think that they can carry on a relationship but after the children are born, they get divorced. A kind of cultural clash takes place and the children who are at the bottom become degenerated (Respondent V).

I mostly feel sorry for the children who become like a wanderer between two cultures. Both sides demand them to learn something different. They feel a kind of in betweenness. On the one side there is the mother and on the other the father. It is really the children who are damaged in such marriages (Respondent F).

There were others who held a milder position about mixed marriages. As worded by an interviewee,

We did experience a mixed marriage in our family. The bride of my uncle was a Muslim. They loved each other so much, they got married. She was very respectful to Armenian traditions, she accepted that her children went to Armenian schools and learned Armenian traditions, but their children were always between two cultures, they were not able to adapt to this situation. My sister-in-law always said if I had a chance, I would probably marry my husband again, but I wouldn't want to have any children (Respondent V).

What a son of a pilgrim woman and some others said about mixed marriages is noticeable since they portrayed a positive attitude about intermarriage,

I don't bother saying I was born Armenian and will die Armenian. People can't choose their religion or sect. It only depends on your father's religion. I am Armenian and so will be my children. I respect the views of others but I always told my Muslim girl friends at the beginning that I was an Armenian and I would transmit Armenian identity to my future children. Thus, I think if the father is an Armenian, the children will be Armenian too (Respondent N).

I think it is (mixed marriages) a source of cultural richness. My marriage is a mixed marriage. I tell my children that the other children have only two religious feasts while they have four. We never say that we are this or that. We say that we are mixed and we try to teach them both cultures and their richness. This is how we brought them up (Respondent P).

My nephew is married with a Muslim, they get along very well and they had no problems since they got married. The main issue is humanity, being a good person (Respondent A).

My bride is a Muslim. At the beginning I was against their marriage but there was love between them. Nothing could be said if there is love. Religion loses its importance when there is love (Respondent L).

Half of the respondents have shown a similar tolerance saying that mutual respect and love is enough to deal with emerging problems. They also said that although some families do not give consent to mixed marriages, they should support their children and help them deal with their problems.

Increasing propensity of intermarriage among the Armenians is linked to the changing trend about sending their children to non-Armenian schools. The respondents said that nowadays well off families are more inclined to send their children to private colleges rather than Armenian schools. This was seen as one of the reasons behind the increasing interaction between the Turks and Armenians and thus, of mixed marriages. Besides, changing patterns of occupation also appears to influence the increasing number of mixed marriages. It was argued that some families do not even want their daughters to work to prevent intermarriages. This worry was reflected by some interviewees,

When I wanted to work my father always reacted claiming that I could meet someone from another community and be attracted to him and marry him (Respondent F).

Having a university degree and working are seen as a way to step outside of community boundaries. For instance, university is the first place when I first had friends outside of our community because I studied in Armenian schools until I started university. So my family always feared that I meet a Turkish man at work or university and marry him (Respondent S).

This suggests that being a woman means having additional responsibilities for the Armenian community as will be discussed further in the following pages in a different context. With regards to intermarriage,

Connell and Hartman develop a similar argument and emphasize that high levels of intermarriage depend on spatial-physical proximity. In their own words, “most marriages, other than arranged marriages, are the products of contact: People have to be able to meet each other. Physical proximity, then, is important (Connell and Hartmann 1998: 170).

Moreover, they focus on the socio-legal dimension including the abolition of marriage prohibitions in normative or legal areas. As mentioned above, a softening in formal and non-formal social control mechanism was also observed among the Armenian community. Mixed marriages are now more tolerated among the Armenians. Also, the Armenian Church in Yeşilköy appears to be more flexible about Church norms as claimed by the interviewees. As one of the respondents argued,

It is of course upsetting. Our Church has begun to practice a middle way at least in rituals for mixed marriages. I mean, non-Christians also come to the Church, participate in our rituals and take prayer for abundance without converting to Christianity. Even if they did it would not be a Christian marriage but it would at least provide permission to attend rituals and prayers. It is a new thing and still not well-defined. This is serious erosion. We are a 60,000 year old community. We have approximately 300 weddings in a year. A quarter of them are mixed marriages. What can we expect from the next generation? In our biology classes at school we learned the meaning of shrinking and enlarging populations. Our numbers indicate that we are a shrinking population. This is a big problem for our identity (Respondent J).

According to Komşuoğlu and Örs, during the last few decades, intermarriage among Turkey’s Armenians was estimated to be around thirty or forty per cent where ninety per cent of these were with Muslim Turks and the

rest are with other Christian minorities in Turkey¹ (Komşuoğlu and Örs 2009, 331). This decrease in biological and cultural reproduction was also mentioned by most of the respondents. In this respect, the views of the ecclesiastic who described the above mentioned issue as an open sore of the community is worth mentioning,

The natures of the soils where different flowers flourish are also different. Even though we are from the same region, one kind of harmony established in one place can't be established in another. You can't shape the circumstances for harmony by yourself because you can't break away from your family when you marry. You can't leave your culture, religion and traditions aside when you marry. Although you try to create a common language, problems arise when your first child is born; what will his name be, which language should he learn first, which school should he attend? ...Giving different heritages to a child does not work. It is our responsibility to bring up our children species from our own. Hybrid people can have many negative aspects which, in turn, can damage the community considerably. People look at these marriages as a gain or loss in terms of children. It's not a gain for either community; it is a loss for both, especially in terms of religion (Respondent D).

We lose our culture, our people; we diminish. We are already an aged community; we don't have many young people...So we are diminishing day by day (Respondent F).

As discussed before, assimilation emphasizes increasing rates of endogamy, exchange of ideas about schooling in public institutions rather than community institutions, and the labor market dimension of ethnicity. The respondents were concerned about endogamy, schooling of their children, and their position in the labor market. Among the youngest generation the propensity to marry someone outside of their community seemed much higher compared to the older generations.

¹ These percentages are based on personal interviews with several important individuals from the Armenian community who have been active in Armenian organizations and who were also interested in the history and society of their community (Komşuoğlu, Örs: 2009).

Whether respondents have a positive or negative outlook towards mixed marriages, they all agreed on the anxiety about protecting their cultural values. However, Barth claims that cultural contact between ethnic groups does not necessarily weaken ethnic identities or cause a collapse of boundary maintenance (Barth 1969: 33). In that respect, some of the interviewees did not consider mixed marriages as a path for de-culturation,

Inescapably mixed marriages occur because we have a small population here. I don't think it is right to impose such a responsibility on people saying that you are an Armenian and you have to marry an Armenian. However, in order to keep the population together perhaps this becomes important. It would be desirable to marry people within our community, but it is inevitable that the population will diffuse. Besides, the important thing is the wish to protect and transfer our culture, to maintain our institutions and make the whole population respect our community. Identity can only be sustained through cultural values, not by intermarriage (Respondent B).

It is like a taboo to marry someone outside of community. People don't even think about this possibility. They even pray so that this doesn't happen to them. It is a big fear among the Armenian community. The reason for that fear is no longer questioned. Ask my family why; they have nothing to say about it. The only thing they can say is that children will have a difficult time if they marry someone outside of their community. Perhaps it is both right and dramatic. Which school will the children attain? What will his name be? What if the person you marry is not someone who respects these things? It is bad if he or she tries to suppress your identity. Moreover, families are also involved in marriage. You can be caught between your family and your husband and have problems. The worst thing in that case is you can't transmit your cultural values to your children and argue that the children belong to the Armenian culture. The children should be taught the values of both cultures and choose his/her own position by him or herself. Otherwise culture is in danger. I myself think the survival of Armenian culture is important. I will do my best to protect our culture, but this doesn't mean you have to marry an Armenian or a Christian man. If you don't know Armenian musicians, Armenian history, songs, literature then marrying an Armenian man means nothing at all. However, people do a lot of stereotyping and they don't even believe that somebody from another culture can respect your ideas about maintaining and

transmitting your culture to your children. Is it not more valuable to achieve this with somebody from outside of community through mutual respect? (Respondent S)

It is difficult to evaluate the weight of these different ideas about mixed marriages. However, personal experiences, place of origin, family, education, religiosity, and gender are the issues which make a difference in the perception of the respondents. Men who are more related with others outside of their community appeared to be more tolerant about intermarriage; women, however, seemed more sensitive and conservative. Moreover, traders who work at the Grand Bazaar or at Yeşilköy were inclined to accept mixed marriages while housewives had an in-between attitude. Families and communities' point of view can be decisive in cases where the children do not have the chance to react against them and leave the social boundaries of their community. In other words, there is pressure on them to comply with the rules of the community as claimed by one of the respondents (Respondent S). Other respondents also argued that,

I have grown up under such pressure. I was told not marry someone other than an Armenian. I don't know whether I would give consent to my children if they wanted to marry someone outside of our community because I don't have any children, but my family had always warned me against mixed marriages since I was a child (Respondent F).

I was always warned that I should never have a Muslim boyfriend. Now I do have a Muslim boyfriend and both my family and his family are not happy about it. This is a mutual attitude (Respondent O).

There were some other views critical about the relationship between intermarriage and ethnic identity. In this context one of the claims was crucial for opening a new debate,

Those Armenians who look negatively on mixed marriages and practice only endogamy are mostly those who are traditional and mostly uneducated. Their political awareness is low; they read only Turkish magazines, then they marry an Armenian but after reading only Turkish magazines how can they preserve our culture (Respondent B).

According to the above comment, being against intermarriage is a superficial idea with respect to preserving Armenian identity and ethnic consciousness. As opposed to this idea an ecclesiastic argued that Armenians in Turkey are not assimilated like the ones in the US or France; thus, mixed marriages here can cause problems. In those countries, Armenians and other groups can feel American or French together with their own ethnic identity. So they do not experience a cultural gap. In other words, cultural as well as political awareness is necessary for the survival of Armenian identity. Moreover, living in a closed community is also important for ethnic identity protection.

Another cultural issue which reflects convergent as well as divergent views is language. As mentioned earlier, loyalty to language is an important sign for loyalty to Armenian identity. Translation of sacred texts and printing written materials are some of the issues for arguing that language is crucial for the protection of Armenian ethnicity as argued by Anderson, Armstrong and Smith (1983; 1982; 2003). Nearly all of the respondents emphasized the link between Armenian language and Armenian identity. As argued by one of the interviewees, “I think Armenian language has an integrative role for Armenian identity. If people have the chance to learn the language, they should learn it and preserve it.” (Respondent W) Anderson believes that language unifies people who do not know each other personally. Language also contributes to

the formation of an imagined community (Anderson 1983: 44). In line with this argument an interviewee argued,

It is important to know their sense of belongingness. I always say that my pain for Armenian, Greek, Jewish, and Kurdish children who can't speak his/her own language is same for the third generation Turkish children who live in the US or Germany who also can't speak Turkish. This is because language is an important part of identity. If an Armenian is not curious about his/her language, if he/she doesn't try to learn it or doesn't wish to learn it, this means he/she is rejecting an important part of his/her culture. In that case cultural survival is impossible. We can't name something as culture without language. If you can't read something about Armenian culture or Armenian traditions this can be a problem for the construction of culture (Respondent D).

Thus, as mentioned above, besides knowing the spoken language, the necessity to learn the alphabet, the grammatical structure and the written language was also mentioned by some of the respondents.

It is clear that a society which is unable to write in its own language can't survive...This is what happened in the Byzantium Empire. Many nations disappeared because of this. If we had not established our own script, we would have disappeared, too. Our script protected our identity (Respondent J).

I think what is more important is the spoken language and the alphabet, which provides the continuity of cultures. The proverb is right; words fly, writing remains. The two complement each other because if there is no alphabet it is almost impossible to transmit the language to the following generations. In that case, language may become open to foreign words; new words from other languages can be accepted. After a while, the language will die. Thus, in my point of view, the alphabet together with the spoken language is the main integrative element of Armenian identity. Alphabet is necessary for educators in order to transmit language to the next generations (Respondent S).

Despite the importance given to the Armenian language nearly half of the respondents said that they could not speak fluent Armenian. The number of

those who can read and write in Armenian language was lower than those who said that they were able only to speak Armenian.

Following this point, the number of respondents who said that they can read Armenian newspapers and books was also low. Only five of the respondents said that they read the Armenian newspapers called *Nor Marmara* and *Jamanak*. Five others who were religious officers and people from various foundations said that they read books in Armenian. The significant fact is that as the newspaper *Agos*, published both in Armenian and Turkish, was mentioned as the most widely read newspaper by more than half of the respondents. According to the numbers provided by a religious officer, the circulation rate of these newspapers was also consistent with the above mentioned claims. According to one of the respondents, the circulation rate of *Agos* is about 5,000 and *Nor Marmara* and *Jamanak* are about 1,000 (Respondent J). However, the respondents said that they read books written in Turkish about Armenian history, culture and literature. Besides, they attributed a considerable importance to being able to read only Armenian newspapers. They also highly valued publishing an Armenian newspaper in Turkish and said that this was an important service provided for the Armenian community in Turkey. These points made by the interviewees suggest that a symbolic significance is attributed to the preservation of Armenian language. Edwards claims that symbolic and communicative aspect of language may exist separately from each other. He adds that “among minority groups or within groups in which language shift has occurred in the reasonably recent past, the value of language as a symbol can remain in the absence of the communicative function“ (Edwards in Hutchinson and Smith, 1996: 227).

Following the above quotation, declining communication in Armenian language and its weak visibility in public cannot directly be linked to the sense of belongingness among the Armenians. Despite external pressures the respondents claimed they faced against using their language in the public, they also stressed the symbolic importance of some aspects of their language such as using their Armenian names outside their homes. As one respondent worded,

In the past, speaking Armenian in public was much more difficult as we didn't want to reveal our Armenian identity. We were careful not to call our moms as mama, but now it's easier. We can now use our Armenians names in public which is important for us (Respondent L).

My name is Aleksan; thank God I didn't change my name. I didn't become Andre or Ahmet Aleksan. My cousin lives in Canada; his name is Jean Aris. I tell about this to my relatives who come here from other countries to visit us (Respondent K).

Although using Armenian language is decreasing, we are not facing a total loss of our language. Our situation is different from those who live in other countries. Here, in Turkey, we have Churches and our own schools (Respondent C).

Hence, although public usage of the language diminishes, it continues to persist as a private and a symbolic identity marker. Also it contributes to the maintenance of group boundaries while permitting social mobility (Edwards in Hutchinson and Smith 1996: 228).

According to the respondents, lack of linguistic knowledge drives partly from the absence of Armenian schools in Anatolia and from the absence of family members who can speak, read or write in Armenian language. Thus, the geographical origin of the respondents again plays a decisive role in the issue of language. That was worded by two of the interviewees as such;

Since neither my mother nor my maternal grand mother knows Armenian, we usually spoke Turkish at home. I could speak Armenian only with my paternal grand mom (Respondent B, Malatya- originated respondent).

I was born in Malatya. My mother and father can both speak the language well. When I attended primary school and later high school in Malatya, I couldn't speak Armenian well. Schools are very important, you know. If you don't attend an Armenian school or there is no community where you can practice the language, you can learn only the dominant language (Respondent B).

The significance attributed to schools was repeated by many others and formal linguistic education was evaluated as the as basic way for learning Armenian. Respondent B expressed this point as follows, "If you are a minority, education in your own schools is necessity, otherwise you can't learn it. Especially for the İstanbul Armenians, schools are at the center of Armenian identity". As another respondent argued,

If schools in İstanbul were closed, the Armenian language in Turkey would die because it is not easy to learn it from family members. As my son has to learn Armenian, I first spoke in Armenian with my son but he got confused. He had difficulty talking (Respondent L).

However, it should be noted that a small group of the respondents found useless to learn Armenian for their daily life. Some even said that it was useless to send their children to Armenian schools. Some of those who sent their children to Armenian schools suggested that language education was not their main concern. Economic conditions and the well being of their children were more important in their choices for their children. In this context they claimed that Armenian schools provided better education than state schools, and that Armenian schools were cheaper than private colleges. As claimed by some of the interviewees,

In Armenian schools, my children can learn Armenian appropriately, but I should make a choice. In my opinion, it is much more important to learn English than Armenian; this is important for their future. Perhaps, the education system in Armenian schools does not fall behind the system in other schools but my priorities are different (Respondent P).

It is meaningless that all lessons are taught in Armenian language; especially in high school. How can a child who graduated from an Armenian high school be successful in the university entrance exam? (Respondent O).

I sent my children to an Armenian school, but if I had more money I would send him to colleges like Saint-Benoit or Pierre Loti. I didn't want to send him to a state school, there was no other alternative. Am I happy? No, because what he learns there will not help him. Saying aubergine in Armenian...I would prefer that he learns French or English. I didn't use Armenian for anything in my life. When I say this in my community as an Armenian people look at me like and think that I am strange (Respondent M).

I don't think the next generation will send their children to Armenian schools. Even today many people from my generation are not inclined to do this. Those who have economic opportunities send their children to private colleges, but those who can't afford these schools send them to community schools (Respondent W).

Another basic difference was noticed between those who emphasize the importance of Armenian language for Armenian identity and those who do not establish a direct link between language, education in Armenian schools and Armenian identity. As noted by two of the respondents,

Of course language has an integrative role but it's not the first requirement for the feeling of belongingness to the Armenian community. A person may not know Turkish but may feel as a Turk. The same is true for an Armenian (Respondent D).

If someone decides to teach my children the Armenian culture including language and religion, there is no need for this; she/he can teach herself/himself. I think schools are inefficient for cultural transmission. Language is not well taught because there are no qualified teachers. Only people who study English literature is able to become an Armenian teacher. As it is much more advantageous, most of them prefer to become an English

teacher. Also there are no Armenian history lessons in schools. How can a person construct his identity without knowing his history? Is language education enough for that? (Respondent S)

While mentioning their concerns about insufficient formal linguistic education, the respondents said that family is the basic unit for the revival of language together with community schools as worded by a respondent,

The children of the Armenians living in İstanbul usually attend Armenian schools. Their fathers and mothers also mostly attended Armenian schools. At home they usually speak Armenian. These families preserve their language. I learned Armenian at school but as my family didn't know the language and as we didn't speak Armenian at home. After university I forgot to speak Armenian. I can understand only a little when listening. So family is very important for learning the language (Respondent T).

Despite divergent views about the issue of language, all of the respondents had a tendency to view family as crucial for the socialization of their children where they can learn the essential values of Armenian identity. To put it differently, family was seen as the unit where Armenianness was maintained and reinforced: "In families where Armenian is spoken children are much more inclined to speak Armenian fluently. School is the secondary place for learning Armenian after the family" (Respondent J). In this context, it was argued that Armenian language and religion should be protected within the family since these are learned through cultural values which are transmitted through the family (Respondent E).

Not only transmission of language and religion, but also of traditions and communal habitudes takes place within the family. Related to this point the respondents emphasized that traditions are mostly practiced within the households and at most at the churches. External factors threatening the

Armenian identity appears to be the reason for emphasizing the home and the church for the protection of their identity as will be discussed below.

Cooking traditional sacred foods, attending ceremonies, working in foundations, and participating in art activities (such as singing in the Church choir or playing in theater games organized by alumni societies) were the examples given for maintaining their traditions and communal ties. Yeşilköy Armenian Apostolic Church (the Surp İstebanoz Church), Yeşilköy Armenian schools and the Alumni Association of Yeşilköy Armenian School were the places where most of the respondents practiced their traditional activities along with some other private places of their community. During these activities, elder family members, mostly the women, guided the children to connect them to the larger community. In other words, it was argued that cooking traditional foods, gathering together and attending all religious activities in the Church were seen as occasions through which they could not only practice their traditions but also teach them to their children.

I take my children to all ceremonies and to all of the activities of our community organizations because these constitute a kind of habitude which they should be part of. They learn how to behave at these ceremonies. Also they make new friends in our community during these activities (Respondent E).

I used to do many things for keeping my traditions alive. For instance, I always took part in our cultural performances, sang in choirs and played piano for charity ceremonies at schools. I even wrote my thesis about an important but forgotten Armenian musician, Edgard Manas. However, now I just try to sustain my life, I can't be as active as I used to be (Respondent S).

As noted above, one third of the respondents were not involved in communal practices. Especially the men, except some who work in community foundations, claimed that their daily life concerns and economic difficulties

prevented them from taking part in such activities. As worded by an interviewee; “We didn’t have much time o practice our traditions because of economical hardship. We visit our church on Sundays. We eat dinner together. It is just for fun, for seeing each other” (Respondent H). In other words, being at work all day and not having much leisure time appeared to be the main reason for not being able to take part in the activities organized by the community although some said that they were not interested in such activities (Respondent Q).

However, the women felt a deeper sense of responsibility about communal practices since they wanted to protect Armenian culture as well as the boundaries of Armenianeness. According to Song, as boundary maintenance is closely related to private domains such as marriage, family relationships and sexuality, the women, especially women of a small community have more weight on her shoulders (2003: 47).

In this respect, the Armenian women were accepted as the major actors in transmitting their cultural heritage and communal practices to the younger generation. In other words taking the children to religious practices and ceremonies as well as other communal activities organized by Armenian schools or foundations was seen as the responsibility of the women. More than half of the women respondents mentioned this responsibility when discussing their culture and traditions. As worded by some of the respondents,

Since I was a child, I had a big responsibility on my shoulders to make our culture survive. You feel such a responsibility if you are born as an Armenian. It doesn’t even matter where you were born. Although it is dictated, daily life experiences make you believe that you are responsible (Respondent S).

I try to go to the Church every week, in all occasions like feasts. I take my children with me. This is a kind of habitude. This is the reason why I take my children there, so they gain such a habitude. They learn the prayers and also learn how to behave in the Church (Respondent E).

I don't go to the Church so frequently but if I had children I would have learned more about our traditions. I would have to explain them the origins of our religious feasts. This was what my mother did. She thought me the importance of Armenian religion and traditions while I was a little child (Respondent G).

The women are more inclined to speak Armenian with their children and they encourage their children to speak Armenian. Most of the respondents said that they spoke Armenian with their mothers in their early ages rather than with their fathers. They also said that they started speaking in Turkish with their children after a certain age (Interviews with E, F, G, M, V, X). As argued by another interviewee,

When I was a child, Armenian was spoken at home. I used to speak Armenian with my mother and Turkish with my father. I still speak Armenian with my mom. But I usually speak Turkish with my father. When we are all together, I start talking in Armenian and finish in Turkish (Respondent P).

Kandriyoti explains the role women play as transmitters of culture as follows, "women are also considered to be custodians of cultural particularisms by virtue of being less assimilated, both culturally and linguistically, into the wider society" (Kandiyoti in Hutchinson and Smith, 1996: 315). By using native language, maintaining cultural traditions, and socializing the children accordingly are shown as the means used by the women by Kandriyoti.

Apart from this process of enculturation of the children, marriage patterns also constitute an important point of reference for the role women play within their community. The decision about whom the women can marry is an

important aspect of the process of reproduction of boundaries. The respondents claimed that although it does make a big difference whether a man or a woman marries someone from outside of community, the pressure on women is much more significant.

The fact that most of the interviewed Armenian women were housewives suggests that the private domain is more important for the construction of Armenian identity. Komşuoğlu and Örs claim that the Armenian women who belong more to the private sphere, feel much more responsibility to preserve the integrity and endurance of their communal culture than men (Komşuoğlu and Örs 2009: 332). As opposed to men, a considerable number of women were at least high school graduates. As people from different ethnic or religious groups come together at the universities, there is an inevitable mixing of these different groups. Half of the women whom were interviewed were university graduates, especially in the fields of education branches. Nevertheless most of them were not working or quit working after they married. So they were only engaged in their private spheres such as their home or communal spheres like the Church, schools or foundations. One of the respondents defined the daily routine of Armenian women as follows,

My mom also had this routine. Although she was determined about studying, after high school she got married and dedicated herself to her husband. Armenian women don't have self-confidence although they are knowledgeable. They feel like their life is over when they marry. When you grow up, this is how you think. Their biggest dream is to work just for a little money, for example, to work as a salesperson. This is the biggest dream you could ever have. Even if you dream more, they will not understand your dreams (Respondent S).

What follows from these arguments is that the public sphere basically belongs to Armenian men who cross the communal boundaries and encounter and interact with people from different ethnic and cultural spheres.

Women not only transmit cultural codes but also the social codes which create the sense of belonging to a minority group. The tendency for being silent towards history and politics and silently fulfilling the requirements of Armenianness was how Armenian women were characterized. Moreover, as argued by the respondents, not being involved too much in public works and not expressing their identity openly everywhere were some of the other codes of behavior which the women transmitted to their children. The reason behind these behavior and its reflections on the community will be elaborated further in the following pages.

By taking all of the above arguments into consideration it is possible to argue that the identification process of Armenian women in İstanbul is different that Armenian men. However, feeling part of the community is not dependent on gender. It is remarkable to note that while most of the respondents intensively exercised many practices during some period in their lives which had symbolic significance for them, nearly half of the respondents said that they have no strong ties with their community. Being a student in an Armenian school, having friends from foundations or having children were noted as some of the factors which led people to be part of the broader Armenian community.

It is also noteworthy that some of the respondents even avoided using the word community since it has a religious meaning attached to it with a negative connotation. The word of community was perceived by most as

something illegal or purely religious which they did not want to be identified with. As claimed by an interviewee, “I don’t like the word community, it’s better to use the term nation or society. The term community has religious reflections” (Respondent B). The reason behind this criticism will be dealt with further in the following chapter while discussing the concept of “the other”.

In general, it can be said that intensive symbolic construction of communal bonds is not openly reflected in the daily relations of the Armenians. However, the mechanisms through which communal bonds are secured can be traced in their support networks. Looking at these networks through which community members help each other reveals more about the actual relations between the Armenians in İstanbul. As claimed by the respondents, special branches of their foundations and the Churches are the main institutions which provide support for needy people in their community. Some of these institutions also financially support other institutions. For this purpose they organize many events such as lotteries, concerts, charity bazaars, and trips. A local priest claimed that the community is eager to come together and they like to work together for the benefit of their community. However, it was also commonly argued that personal ties between the members of the community are not too strong; relations are not intimate and there is jealousy between people. This was described as a contradiction and was explained by the priest in an ironic way,

In reply to your question I will tell you a humorous story and then refute what I said. The God invites one person from all nations and asks them to invite one of their friends too. He says I will make your wish come true but give your friend twice as much what you get. First a Jewish man and his friend comes. He wishes a big factory. He gets what he wished while his friend gets two factories. They cooperate and establish a big factory together. Then a Frenchman comes with his friend. Then an Englishman...Then comes an Armenian together with his

friend. He turns to his friend and says look Agop you will get two of what I wish to get. So you have to give me half of what you get. His friend says no, Sarkis, I won't give you half of what I get. They discuss all the way long. At the end Sarkis makes his wish and asks the God to poke one of his eyes out. So the God does and then pokes two of his friend's eyes out. To be honest this is what characterizes the Armenians. We easily become jealous of those who have a better position in our community. There are only a small number of people who are aware of the problems of our community. There are 60,000 community members, but only 2,000 or 3,000 of them are deeply involved in the activities of our community. However, even this is enough for protecting and supporting our institutions. We normally don't receive any support from the state, but we can protect our institutions with the help of just 2,000 or 3,000 people. We have two dance groups where there are 150 people, two sports clubs, one patriarchate, and seven Churches only in Kumkapı. Without this kind of solidarity, I think this wouldn't be possible. As I said, we are a strange community; we like to help other, but we can also poke each others eyes out (Respondent J).

In most of the respondents narratives a sense of belongingness and communal solidarity existed together with individualistic behavior. While they criticized certain aspects of their community, they also emphasized some of its positive characteristics. Describing the Armenians as hardworking, charitable and honest people who do their job properly were some of the positive themes repeated by the respondents. During the interviews they also underlined their sense of belongingness to the lands where they have lived or still living on. As noted by two of the interviewees,

You ask me to reveal some of the confidential features of our community. I wish I could say that the Armenian community is a community whose members love each other and work for each other. Unfortunately I can't say this. However, I should emphasize that they are consistent people, bounded to the place where they live; they are also friendly people (Respondent D).

Armenians have always worked for the benefit of the lands where they have lived. However, they have not done much for

their own community. Greeks or Russians love Armenians, but Armenians don't love each other (Respondent T).

A community whose members do not have much interaction with each other yet who have established strong bonds appears to be an inconsistent. However, the fear of extinction of a community with a population of 70,000 and its minority status has to be taken into account to grasp the above mentioned peculiarities of the Armenians. In this context the geographical location of the Armenians in İstanbul can also be seen as a consequence of their fears stemming from their status in the society. The location of their institutions also has an important role in the concentration of the Armenian population in certain areas of İstanbul such as Yeşilköy, Bakırköy, Şişli, Kumkapı. As two respondents claimed,

Armenians live in Yeşilköy because there they have their school and their Church, which brings them into being. Also they feel much more secure because there is an established community life in Yeşilköy. They can see each other more frequently and they feel much more secure because they are most populous there. Although it is close to Yeşilköy, they can't live in Ataköy for instance. They can live in Bakırköy, Şişli, Kadıköy or Kurtuluş (Respondent B).

As an Armenian you can live in certain regions in İstanbul; Yeşilköy is one of them. It is not possible for us to live in Gaziosmanpaşa for instance. When I go there, I have to hide my identity (Respondent G).

The above quotations reveal that besides structural factors, there are some other social factors which explain the concentration of Armenians in certain places of İstanbul. These will be dealt with further when discussing the external influences shaping the process of Armenian identity formation. In addition to these external impacts, attempts to maintain group solidarity also cause a shift in the self-perception of the community. Consequently, the

Armenians feel forced to live in close contact with each other to protect their group from extinction. The resulting geographic isolation appears to be the result of external social pressure or social control of the broader society which can be traced in their choices of work or marriage as discussed above. However, although there are some common points of reference for the Armenians such as religion and language, it is difficult to trace a uniform understanding of the Armenian community and culture. Following Cohen's argument, the boundaries of Armenianness is drawn mostly by means of symbols to which they attribute similar meanings. The Armenian community can be described as the sum of these symbolic meanings. Creation of a sense of belongingness to the community is a multi-layered process. Education level, gender and occupation influence its form and intensity. Although there were many divergences, the women, the young and the non-educated sections of the Armenian population who attended only Armenian schools and who have an Anatolian origin appear to have the strongest ties with the Armenian community and culture. They mostly identify themselves with reference to their community where self-naming becomes crucial. When people were asked to define their identity twelve of out twenty four respondents replied that their primary identity was Armenian. Half of these emphasized ethno-religiosity and equated Christianity with Armenianness. The rest referred either to a homeland (e.g. "Türkiyeli", "from İstanbul" or "from Anatolia") or to citizenship mostly saying that they were the "citizens of the Turkish Republic", expressed in Turkish as "T.C. vatandaşı" (Turkish Republic citizens). Only a four of the respondents defined their primary identity as Turk.

Added to these various types of identification, another definition is mentioned by Der Karabetian and Balian in their study about Turkish Armenians. They use the concept of “global human identity” which refers to a broader out-group detached not only from their local ethnic group (Turkish Armenians) but also from the broader Turkish society (Turks). In other words, the term refers the humanity as a whole as an alternative source of identification (Glick in Der- Karabetian and Balian 1991: 499). A similar kind of identification or belongingness was also mentioned by approximately a quarter of the respondents. In their narratives their identification was not limited in their ethnic identity, culture or citizenship whether they felt primarily as an Armenian or Turk. This group of respondents had a wider perspective of identification. These were also those who claimed that “they are from Turkey” or defined themselves as “Türkiyeli”. While they felt at a distance from their community, they try to accomplish the symbolic practices of being an Armenian and maintain their bonds with their community. In this context, Der Karabetian and Rosen argue that outer-group relations enrich the above mentioned global sense of identification. They argues that,

The more socially intimate and the longer the contact, the stronger the global human identification. Conceivably, greater exposure to Turkish culture, as different as it is from Armenian culture, could enhance not only Turkish identity but also identification with the global-human community (Der-Karabetian and Balian 1991: 499).

This argument constitutes one of the major ideas which will be discussed in the following section, i.e. the impact of out-group relations on Armenian identity who live in Yeşilköy.

4.3 The Process of Making and Being the Other

In the previous part of the chapter, cultural practices of Turkish Armenians which occupy an important position in their identity were dealt with. However, in order to talk about Armenian identity appropriately, both internal as well as external dynamics have to be taken into consideration. Cohen argues that the degree of sensitivity about communities' own identity is on the increase when the community encounters its “others” at its boundaries (Cohen 1985:69). Relatively, Armenian identity in Turkey should be analyzed by means of inclusion and exclusion mechanisms of Armenians and the other groups they are in relation with. Thus, in this part of the study, the impact of other cultures on Armenian identity as well as the reflections of relations with others on construction of Armenian identity will be discussed.

Yeşilköy, where the study was conducted, is the location where people from different ethnic identities (Armenians, Turks, Assyrians, Greeks, Kurds, and Jews) have coexisted and still co-exist despite the changing percentage of groups. Armenians who have been interviewed during the study usually refer to the significance of the multicultural atmosphere of Yeşilköy allowing them to preserve their Armenian identity which was mentioned in the previous chapter. However, a multi-dimensional process is at work. As Barth claims, that multicultural environment strengthens the boundaries of Armenian identity formed during that interaction process which also makes a transmission of cultural stuff possible (Barth 1969: 15). Although most of the respondents narrated stories about interactions and transfer of cultural features, there is a

distinctive difference in tendency about evaluation of that process between two groups of respondents. The first group, who are mostly composed of Grand-Bazaar merchants and their relatives, who are strictly against mixed marriages and who frequently practice religious rituals and other Armenian traditions are inclined to consider this process as a deformation of Armenian culture and they feel the discomfort due to such hybridization. However, besides being against too much hybridization, and supporting the closeness of the community, they, at the same time prefer to stay away from politics and not to reflect their identity in the area of legal rights and liberties.

The other minor group, who mostly work freelance, and who emphasize the legal status of Armenians in Turkey are opposed to closeness of Armenian community in Turkey, but at the same time give priority to the Armenian consciousness and rights and liberties against the symbolic practices of cultural stuff. As one of the respondents from this minor group mentions;

You are not talking with a typical Armenian, I should say. If you were, he or she would tell you that everything is in good working order. He or she would say nothing negative about the life of an Armenian in Turkey. There is a huge number of Armenians who are unaware of Armenian newspapers, read the Turkish newspaper *Hürriyet*, whose motto is “Turkey belongs to Turks”. I even have some friends who attended Armenian high schools but did not declare their Armenian identity publicly at the schools they attended and at the places work. This may be interpreted as a kind of conformism of course. So, even if these traditionalists are against assimilation, how can they preserve their culture while they fear expressing their identity publicly?
(Respondent B)

That comment of respondent B on the insufficiency of a kind of symbolic ethnicity for the survival of Armenian identity signifies one of the basic divergences within the people who were interwoven. Despite a kind of

collective conformity, common value-judgments within the Armenian community as mentioned in the previous part of the study, the degree of conformity and assimilation as well as the meaning attributed to symbolic features may vary enormously. “I feel lonely; I feel myself as the other in my own community in some cases” one of the respondents claimed.

By taking such variability into consideration in this part of the study, otherness of Armenian community in Yeşilköy and the mostly mentioned “others” of the Armenian community in and out of Turkey as well as their interaction process will be discussed based on the perception of the respondents.

4. 3. a. Being a Turkish-Armenian versus an Armenian-Origin Turk

As Barth claims, ethnicity is a product of external as well as internal dynamics, so a community should practice inclusionary as well as exclusionary mechanisms for its existence and self-definition (Barth, in Jenkins 1996: 96). Relation and transfer of traits between two communities may co-exist together with differences and distance established by these exclusionary mechanisms.

For the respondents, Turkish identity is both part of Armenian identity and one of its others as mentioned previously. Their personal experiences lead them to differentiate people from Turkish origin and Turkish State. As for the people from Turkish origin, most of the respondents emphasized the themes such common/similar culture, traditions, warm relations, hospitality, and mutual respect to cultural traits. They are inclined to evaluate the roots of Armenian and Turkish cultures as two kinds of Anatolian culture mingled on

the same soil. Sincerity in mutual relations with Turks, mutual support they give each other especially in cases of emergencies was emphasized within their personal narratives.

Most of my friends who I can call in all cases are Turks. Even if they are busy, they do not hesitate to help us when we have a difficulty to deal with; we haven't had any problems with Turks. During my childhood, in our ceremonies we prepared special foods and took them to our Muslim neighbors and they in turn did similar things (Respondent I).

My mother was reading Quran while I was a child together with the Bible. Even today, although she is a 70 years old woman, she continues to read it. Respect is respect. Our God is unique (Respondent K).

Together with their personal affinities with Turks, respondents point out to the prejudices of people they first met. They call these people as uneducated, without a certain multicultural experience, nationalist, biased and differentiate them from those who they are in continuous relation with. Besides, they believe that the ideas indoctrinated during the educational period or at home forms and reforms these prejudices. These institutional motives will be re-evaluated in the next part of the chapter.

In the last college where I worked, a documentary was filmed on 29 October. In that film betrayal of many non-Muslims are shown. So, it is not surprising that I couldn't tell I am an Armenian in that school. As I didn't tell my students my origin, they investigated my ethnic identity. They asked my opinion about my identity as an Armenian and also about 1915. I heard some words like: We will not leave these lands to you, who the hell was Hrant Dink! and things like that (Respondent T).

Prejudices exist of course, but if the person you speak to is ignorant, what can you do? Yesterday, a person I met first told me: "Oh, you are like us!" I won't take that person seriously. Here among the people who know me well, I am a respected and trustworthy person. I don't even have a problem among those who recognize me. All of my friends are aware of my

identity. We have even talked about Armenian identity (Respondent R).

As indicated in the last comment, personal bounds seem to create a peaceful and respectful atmosphere for the survival of Armenian identity but indeed, an attempt to be careful while behaving in public is perceived in nearly all of the respondents. Especially childhood memories are full of narratives in which they try not to attract attention and to live without telling that they are Armenians.

That behavior may remain the concept of “the self-fulfilling prophecy” defined by Merton as a reformation of one’s behavior according to the expectations and labeling of others”. While trying to act according to dominant norms, Armenians turn out from being part of legal minority group from feeling as a minority within the whole society (Merton, 1968: 477). That concept of minority and its implications for Armenian community will be discussed in depth in the next part of the study but such feeling can be exemplified with the narrative mentioned below.

I think the most problematic issue for an Armenian in Turkey is to be seen as a second class citizen, not all of us perhaps but certainly our grandmothers and grandfathers felt themselves as the other. Even we, in some places feel ourselves as aliens. We are afraid of revealing our identity. We tend to stay back. If you ask me weather we feel ourselves more important than we did in the past, no we do not! Events have increased our doubts (Respondent Q).

As can be recalled by the respondent Q, recent developments such as the murders of Hrant Dink, a priest in Trabzon, and missionaries in Malatya have contributed in a way to that sense of insecurity, which in turn have frequently been repeated within most of the interviews.

Jenkins refers to the study of “Stigma” of Goffman and points out that the gap between virtual and actual characteristics of the group. According to Jenkins, Goffman refers to the construction of identity by means of these stigmas (Jenkins 1996: 73).

Relative to that, attribution of negative characteristics and faults to Armenian community constitutes one of the reasons behind that public silence.

Sperber claims that such classifications, stereotypes can be described as symbols formed as a result of minimum personal experience and evidence and produce maximum assumption about an identity (Sperber, 1975: 4). In case of Armenians, historical events, media, family, friends, and schools contribute in a way to the construction of these stereotypes according to respondents.

They have added that Armenians are mostly accused by some part of the community as being traitors, gavur (non-believer/Muslim), unreliable and indifferent to Turkish culture.

In my childhood, I heard the word “gavur” (non-believer/Muslim) frequently as a label. What does gavur mean? A non-believer, but I believe in God, I believe in a religion. That is the most humiliating word I have ever heard (Respondent L).

In many narratives, the uneasiness about emerging conservatism and nationalism among the public as a whole was mentioned.

Indeed, we could easily keep our crosses seen on us, but now when we get on the train we try to hide it. In other words, we were able to act more comfortably before. If I respect your religion, your symbols, then you should respect mine; you cannot place the burden of past mistakes on my shoulder (Respondent O).

In recent years, nationalism has outgrown distinctly among the population. In such environment you cannot form democracy. For instance, I have some friends from İzmir, very modern,

humanistic, well- intentioned in essence but they are severely affected from that wave of nationalism (Respondent B).

There is a clear-cut distinction between those expressing their doubts and that content of current atmosphere. Armenians from Eastern part of Anatolia who were influenced by 1915 relocation more deeply are more inclined to reclaim the danger of nationalism and fundamentalism rather than the others. On the one hand, they argue that their relations with Turks are sincere, on the other they refer to past and add that it will take time to cure these injuries mutually by quoting well-known Turkish proverb, “We are both unjustly treated”.

Those doubts have resulted by a kind of silence, a sense of silence about the past by which respondents refrain from emphasizing and expressing openly the features of their identity publicly. It may also pave way to an overemphasis made on sameness with Muslim Turks and Christian Armenians. “I feel more of a Turk than another person from Turkish origin” was the phrase mostly repeated within the interviews. Besides, a considerable part of the respondents take being a Turk as a nationality and so they do not refer to the ethnic origins but rather the land they live in.

I don't feel myself different from Turkish Muslims. I can do everything my Muslim friends do. Not a different or extreme one (Respondent W). I may only do a religious distinction because I believe that we are all Turks as we all live in Turkey. Our sub-identity is Armenian only (Respondent L).

It is remarkable that youngest respondents are much more open to respond to questions about the past and more confidently express their ethnic identity without trying to emphasize sameness defendant, more confidently.

One of the respondents claimed that the creation of these kinds of prejudices is a mutual process. During the interviews, the boundaries between Turks and Armenians appeared clearer while talking about religion, especially about the headscarf, religious ceremonies, religious traditions, and religious education. Respondents referred to the rigidity, fundamentalism and superficiality. Based on these criteria, they draw a clear-cut line between “you and us”.

Armenians are discontent of only being labeled as a community having delicious food traditions and deep religious bounds. They have repeated that they have one of the most ancient cultures of Anatolia but their culture is mostly unknown by the whole community.

I don't think Turkish society recognizes Armenian society so well because people only give priority to those they have heard from somewhere. I cannot even say to those they have read, because we are not as a whole a society inclined to read. Curiosity exists but without having an in-depth knowledge (Respondent N).

To reverse the stereotypes, respondents highlighted positive characteristics that Turks attributed to them as being hard working, being inclined to the artistic positions. These features are also expressed as references which Turks pay attention while employing Armenian people by the respondents. That pride may be considered as a resource of security for the Armenian identity.

That behavior may illustrate a kind of strategy observed among ethnic and other disadvantaged groups described by Cohen as “to de-stigmatises the stigma and stereotypes by honour them” (Cohen 1985: 60).

For the respondents, being a member of minority may also mean rarity. They interpret being a member of minority as being an important colour within the community which gives the whole Anatolian culture one of its speciality. Also, irony plays an important role in that de-stigmatization. “At work I have heard some people say: you were made soap, weren’t you? I respond to these kinds of insults calmly and say that it was the Jews not the Armenians” (Respondent M).

Together with interactions with Turks, the perception of Armenians in Turkey about the people from different ethnic origins also seems clarifying their construction of Armenian identity. Historical encounters and common or similar experiences which define that process will be dealt with in the next chapter.

4.3. b. Making the Other

Although the process of making the others is usually be diverged towards the minor group, it can be used by a minor group towards other minor group in a society. İstanbul, especially Yeşilköy where the field research was conducted, Turks, Greeks, Assyrians, Armenians, Jews, and Kurds have lived and are still living all together for a long time. So the relations of minor ethnic groups are also definitive in a sense that influences the identity of different groups.

The narratives usually indicated that besides appreciating the unity of Jews and their talents on merchandise, respondents accused them of being the mischief-maker between Turks and Armenians in Turkey. One of the respondents speaks this way:

They have not liked us, and they label us as rats. They are mostly responsible for the degeneration of relations between Turks and Armenians. Historically, that has been the case. Even the conscription system broke up with their involvement. They are those who took social as well as economical place into the whole community (Respondent K).

Not only Jews but also Assyrians constitute one of the other of Armenian identity. Respondents usually compared their loyalty to traditions and their unity with Assyrians. On the other hand, they accused them of being non-modern, ignorant, unsociable, vulgar, and parvenu.

I won't engage in a trade relation with Assyrian people. We are not such a closed community. We are not such a static and traditional one. Assyrians still like living in a feudal system. They are not living with the norms of urban life I can say. These are what I have observed throughout my life (Respondent B).

However, on the other hand they appreciate their deep loyalty to their traditions, their sense of unity and the support they give to their community, which lacks in Armenians according to the respondents.

Being the newly comers of İstanbul and Yeşilköy is one of the basic reasons behind that point of view of Armenians. A similar inclination is seen for the Kurdish people. The categorization of two groups of respondents made above may be helpful to evaluate the views about Kurdish people. A more traditional group, working as tradesman, possessing a less global human identity blames Kurds for degeneration İstanbul and city life in Yeşilköy. While making such comments, most of the respondents refer to the historical background of Armenian relations with Kurdish people in Anatolia, especially to the periods before and during the relocation of 1915. The other group, much more politicized compares their status of being a minority with Kurds and

charges the state for creating the polarization about these issues by inciting nationalism.

Kurdish problem cannot be solved by military means only, a humanistic solution must be found. Otherwise people feel themselves much intensively as the others. I think it is a mutual tragedy, this state of war (Respondent C).

That type of comparison about the sense of being minority is also made with Alevis by some of the respondents. One of the respondents argued that Alevis have much more difficulty in expressing their identity in public than Armenians and added that “They have called us “gavur” (non-believer/Muslim) and then they are indifferent. But Alevis are always under pressure” (Respondent E). As it is understood from these comments, there is a divergence of opinion about the relations with public institutions or government. It should be said that a clear-cut difference is perceived between their judgment about the government and public. “Despite of all attempts of the government, government officials and institutions, I have never had a noticeable negative reaction about my Armenian identity from the public” (Respondent C). That issue will also be elaborated in next part of the chapter.

Besides the others expressed below, Armenian community in Turkey has a complex relationship with Armenians who live out of Turkish boundaries. Similarities and differences, identification and differentiation work together. In the next part of the chapter, that process and the relations of Armenians of Turkey with Diaspora Armenians and Armenians of Armenia will be evaluated by means of perceptions of the respondents.

4.3. c. The Outside Circle; Diaspora Armenians

According to Dink, that the constitution of Armenian Diaspora goes back to 200 years ago trade relations as well as religious ones. After that first wave, that process of Diaspora continues with forced migration of 1915 events and movements from Middle Eastern countries to western ones (Dink, 2008: 19). Thus, Diaspora is an important constitutive part of Armenian history, culture and values. As Yumul claims, especially after the beginning of the 20th century, cities like Beirut, Alexandria in the East and New York, Los Angeles in the West constitutes important places of residences for Armenians. However, for Turkish Armenians, İstanbul preserves its privileged position (Yumul, 1992: 47).

Migration stories and sense of being a dispersed community occupies a big place in respondents' narratives. Almost all of the respondents have some relatives living in Diaspora. They carry on their relations with them, a considerable number of them labeled themselves as part of Armenian nation as a whole. However, despite such transnational bounds a kind of total identification cannot be established with Diaspora Armenians as well as Armenians of Armenia.

Hall claims that "Diasporas are products of cultural hybridism. They bear the traces of particular cultures, traditions, languages, systems of belief, texts and histories which have shaped them... They are not and will never be unified in the old sense because they are inevitably the products of several interlocking histories and cultures belonging at the same time to several homes and to no one particular home" (Hall 1993: 361). Depending on that argument,

the respondents clearly differentiated themselves from the Armenian Diaspora. Most of the respondents, besides admitting ethno-religious and linguistic bounds with Armenians in Diaspora and in Armenia, put a distance between themselves. Even they affirmed that they are the purest and uncorrupted community between whole Armenian nations.

Safran claims that “Diaspora beliefs are not necessary shared by those remaining in homeland” (Safran, 2005: 41). Relative to that assumption, a subject frequently repeated about Diaspora was the assimilation process. Most of the respondents indicated that Armenians living in Diaspora are melted into the dominant culture in which they live in and do not practice Armenian traditions appropriately. They compare their Armenian identity with those living in Diaspora. Also, some of the respondents have focused on the lacking opportunities to live as a closed community (such as Armenian churches, schools and foundations) and to practice traditions of Armenian Diaspora.

Accordingly, Hrant Dink elaborates that process of preservation of Armenian identity by making a geographical distinction between western and eastern countries. He claims that in the East, Armenian identity is much more properly protected in response to outside catalysts defining the boundaries with others. However, in West, despite of the fluidity of differences, Armenian traits tend to dissolve much more easily (Dink, 2010: 20). These comments may be linked to the Barthian approach emphasizing the necessity of boundaries for the existence of a community. Most of the respondents’ narratives mentioned in the previous chapters indicated that the sharpness of ethnic and religious differences catalyzed Armenians attempt to protect their identity.

Another point is that while respondents evaluated the Armenian identity of Diaspora as insufficient, some of them in turn complained about the non-recognition of their Armenian identity by Diaspora Armenians as well. The narrative mentioned below exemplifies that uneasiness.

They evaluate me as a Turk, not an Armenian because they were taught like that. That is also a wrong attitude. I cannot be considered totally Armenian in Canada, not a total Turk in Turkey. That is the identity conflict Armenians from Turkey are born with and have to live with (Respondent D).

Safran argues that remembering takes place of religion as well as language in the process of ethnic identification for Diasporas, which is also the case for Armenian Diaspora. Relocation as one of the identification mechanisms constitutes a basic point which leads to a sharp divergence between Armenians in Diaspora and Turkey (Safran 2008: 42). The field work has indicated that the respondents have a self-positioned view against the view of the Diaspora about the 1915 relocation. Although a considerable number of the respondents share the sensitivity of the Diaspora, most of them find the attempts of Diaspora to get the support of European countries problematic. They find such sharp attitude and that kind of carrots and sticks policy dangerous. Also, they believe in the necessity for a consensus without the intervention of others to solve historical discontentment. Another point which should not be disregarded about this issue is the discontentment of some of the respondents about the impact of Diaspora's behaviors on their own life. They argued that especially in times of crisis, Armenians of Turkey are mostly affected by the behaviors and negative approaches of the Diaspora.

I do not understand why people in Diaspora are so much engaged in 1915. Of course, the existence of that tragedy should be admitted but why offer a proposal about that issue to the US

council? After that, it will never be the Armenians in America who will be harmed but it will always be those living in Turkey and Armenia. Diaspora Armenians are at most coming to Turkey for two months, in summer they enjoy themselves on the Islands and then return (Respondent M).

Safran's comment on the position of Diaspora about past events supports respondents' evaluations about Armenian Diaspora. According to Safran, Diaspora communities have difficulty in forgetting past traumas and forgiving historical hostilities (Safran 1991). That leads inevitably to the reproduction of fears and prejudices. Respondents have often pointed out that process by narrating some anecdotes about their relatives or friends living in Diaspora. They claimed that they try understanding Diaspora's reaction against Turkey and Turks by associating it with nostalgia for past and reproduction of trauma. As mentioned in the theoretical part of the study, melancholia is one of the sustaining veins of the Diasporic communities. Some of the respondents focused on that melancholia and nostalgia as such;

Anatolia is the homeland of Armenian people living in diverse parts of the world. All of them miss Anatolia, even though they have never been there, they still look at a photo and claim that their ancestors had lands over there. The prejudices Diaspora hold has its basis from such kind of feeling I think. Two years ago, one of my friends living in the US took me to his vineyards. It was a very big one. He gains a minimum of \$ 600,000 a year from the vineyards, but he still talks about the small vineyards of his father's in Urfa (Respondent I).

On the one hand, respondents' narratives indicate that although a unity or identification can not be found between Diaspora Armenians and Armenians in Turkey, ethno-religious bounds with the whole Armenian nation, outside the national boundaries still exist. Diaspora, having a sense of being part of Armenian "imagined community", constitutes a crucial layer of Armenian

identity in Turkey. Respondents maintain a continuing relationship in terms of remittances, investment, population movements, marriages, and cultural exchanges as Safran argues (Safran, 2008: 39). Nearly all the respondents have some relatives living in Diaspora. Some of them have migrated recently for marriage or for economic reasons.

On the other hand, narratives indicate that the meaning attached to Anatolia, İstanbul and those people living in those lands as well, have priority over these transnational bounds. From that perspective, meeting somebody from Turkey in another country is expressed as a primary source of happiness by a considerable number of the respondents. Thus, it will not be unjust to claim that the existence of an outside circle is up to a point definitive in their self-perception of identity.

The reactions of Diaspora against Turkey as well as against the attitudes of Armenians of Turkey create a kind of distance with Diaspora. That rejection of Diaspora Armenians contributes to the sense of in-betweenness of the Armenians in Turkey.

Together with Diaspora, the relations with Armenians of Armenia constitute a breakpoint for Armenian identity in Turkey. Although Anatolia is positioned as the homeland of Armenians in Turkey, the existence of an independent state of Armenia leads to a self-evaluation of their Armenian identity. The comparison they made with Armenians outside Turkey and priority they attached to themselves over Armenians of Diaspora and Armenia may be interpreted as a proof of that breakpoint. In the next part of the chapter,

relations with Armenians of Armenia and perceptions of respondents about them will be dealt with.

4.3. d. Newly Established Homeland, Armenia

The first independent Armenian Republic established between 1918 and 1920 is located in the memory of Armenians of Turkey at most as a newly established homeland and as one of the religious centers of Armenians (Echimaizin). Although consanguinity is mentioned, common ethnic origins are emphasized; Armenians of Armenia are evaluated as members of a different culture and a different country.

Besides, a general tendency to make a distinction between Eastern and Western Armenians was perceived in the narratives. Nearly one third of the respondents have labeled Armenians of Armenia as Eastern Armenians. They claimed that Armenians of Armenia are under the impact of a different culture than themselves. Armenians sense of necessity to adapt to the social characteristics of the country they are living in was also emphasized by some of the respondents.

Moreover, the political culture in which they have been brought up constitutes one of the basic constituents of the gap described by respondents. Hence, they have difficulties to identify themselves with Armenians of Armenia. The sense of being bound by the land as well as being a citizen of Turkish republic have an impact on that process of identification which will be dealt with in the next chapter.

Eastern Armenians were under the dominance of Iran at first. After 1920, they began to live under the sovereignty of Russians. We have different mentalities. Although basically all

of us are Armenians, we were under the influence of Ottoman culture (Respondent R).

Thus, it will not be wrong to claim that the ethnic culture of Armenians in Armenia is largely shaped by the elements picked up from the organizational vessel as claimed by Barth. So, the impact of the culture lived in is also crucial in that process of picking up (Barth 1969: 14). One of the frequently mentioned phrases to separate Armenians of Armenia from the Armenians of Turkey is the influence of Russians that Armenians of Armenia live with. That perception decreases the degree of identification of respondents with Armenians in Armenia. That distinction is significant for understanding the self-positioning of Armenians of Turkey.

Armenia is a place where I have no other bound than ethnic one. My country is Turkey. Being part of same ethnicity does not bring about the same way of thinking. We are a member of two different countries, it doesn't matter whether you feel similar or not. Our differences are much more visible than our similarities. Our similarities is limited to unity of ethnicity, religion and traditions but our evaluation criteria's of the events, our worldview is directly related with the lands we live in (Respondent D).

Armenians from Armenia that respondents came across are usually those coming to Turkey for babysitting, eldercare or patient care. As Armenia is not a place where Armenians of Turkey frequently visit, in most of the narratives, those people are taken as a point of reference to evaluate relations with Armenians of Armenia.

Language is a crucial element of difference between Armenians of Turkey and Armenians of Armenia. Respondents claim that they have difficulty in communicating with the Armenians of Armenia. They compare

the purity, fluency of Armenian language spoken in Turkey, especially in İstanbul with the language spoken in Armenia. Borrowing Russian words is seen as the basic reason behind the difficulty in communicating with Armenians of Armenia. That difference of language is used by the respondents as a kind of self-identification, a sign of differentiation from and even a kind of superiority over Armenians of Armenia.

As an Armenian, I think Armenians living in Turkey are much more different. They are more modern. I have never got along with an Armenian from Armenia. I am a bit biased perhaps. They are part of another society and culture. Armenians of Turkey are much more qualified (Respondent H).

It should be noted that, the place of origins plays an important role in the ideas of respondents about Armenians of Armenia, especially Armenians from İstanbul make them resemble to Anatolian Armenians with their traditions, usage of language and behavior.

Our traditions are very different from the traditions of those who live in Armenia. Their life styles, traditions do not resemble the life styles and traditions of our Anatolian people. Even you can tell an Armenian by the way they get dressed. They themselves, their language and even their religious practices are a bit rude. We are like strangers to each other (Respondent X)

On the other hand, some of the respondents have emphasized positive characteristics of Armenia and its people.

I have been to Armenia. My impressions are very positive. Urbanization, clean parks, forests, operas, smiling and smartly dressed people and considerable number of women having their roles in public life (Respondent B).

That positive image is mixed with a sense of pity and sensitivity perceived towards the current situation of Armenians in Armenia. 1915

relocation, 1988 earthquake, decline of the Soviet regime and economic crisis, discussions about opening of borders with Turkey, and the issue of Nagorno Karabakh are some critical issues respondents refer to. Respondents' comments on these issues by emphasizing their impact on lives of Armenians were not so deeply mentioned on political aspects. Only few respondents underlined the necessity to open up boundaries and the pragmatist position of Diaspora in these political problems. The poverty of the country is one of the mostly repeated reasons behind that sorrow of the respondents. However, that feeling is not associated with a total sense of unity of Armenian nation.

From the beginning of the study self-naming of Armenians was usually discussed. At that point, being a member of the same nation or ethnic group with Armenians of Armenia is a complicated issue for Armenians in Turkey. Narratives have indicated that most of respondents do not equalize ethnicity and nationhood. Except for some of them claiming to be a part of Armenian nation, most of them directly relate nationhood with the statehood. Relative to that, respondents usually evaluate current political crisis not as a member of Armenian nation but as a citizen of Turkish State. Even by referring to the political mistakes made by the Turkish governments about the relations with Armenia, they focus on its reflection and impact on the public image of Turkey.

I side with Turkey about the issues with Armenia. I do not evaluate these relations different from another country (Respondent I).

As mentioned above, Armenia is not a place frequently visited by Armenians of Turkey. Especially young respondents are not even eager to visit Armenia. They at most feel sorrow towards the economic and social problems

of Armenians of Armenia. However, the impression of Armenia and Armenians are positive for almost all of the respondents:

My uncle has been to Armenia. They told it was a beautiful place. There is also the impact of national feelings... People are very poor. That's all I know about Armenia. I don't want to visit Armenia again because I don't think I will return with good feelings but my father is very eager to visit. I intend to organize a visit for him only (Respondent M).

Yet, for the elderly respondents Armenia is a place which should be visited once as one of the centers of their ethno-religiosity.

I want to go there. Armenians should visit there at least for religious as well as historical reasons (Respondent U).

The last point which is worth mentioning is the positive attitudes that respondents think Armenians of Armenia have towards Turks.

In Easter period, we went to Yerevan with a Turkish friend. When I told that my friend was a Turk, people were much more interested in her than me. They behaved so kindly to her. People are like that (Respondent C).

Many Armenians have worked in our house to take care of my wife, I have never heard a negative word about Turks from them, and they have always said they just are grateful to Turkey. They have to work there. They cannot find jobs in Armenia (Respondent A).

In summary, Armenia, a newly established nation-state, bound to the invented traditions (Hobsbawn, 1983) is like a place where Armenians of Turkey maintain historical and cultural links. However, narratives of the respondents signify that state boundaries do not intersect with the group boundaries of Armenians of Turkey.

In that part of the study, the existence of the other for the self-definition of Armenian identity is discussed. As mentioned previously, although Armenian community has some Diaspora traits, they consider primarily

Anatolia and then İstanbul as their homeland. Depending on that, narratives have indicated that a shared culture and homeland rather than ethnic roots, and features, seems much more significant for the expression of similarities for Armenians in Yeşilköy. On the one hand, even the respondents who are strictly against the deformation of Armenian culture and claiming to be a good practitioner of traditions are inclined to evaluate positively some intercultural transfer. On the other hand, the sense of having a member of a different ethno-religious group from the majority was perceived in the narratives of almost all respondents. So, it may be said that this sense keeps the boundaries of being Armenians alive.

The transnational relations with Armenians increased the sense of being in between of Armenians in Turkey. That feeling is especially perceived when they need to self-position in political discussions. The stereotypes respondents have felt and have during the interaction process with others, are important constituents of identification of Armenians.

Until that part of the study, the dialectical identification process of Armenians in Yeşilköy was elaborated by means of perceptions of the respondents. In the next part, external factors influencing identification process of Armenians will be dealt with in the light of being a minority together with being a citizen, as well as having rights and liberties, and making use of public institutions.

4.4 Reflection of Structure and Processes on Armenian Identity

Until this part, an actor center analysis about Armenian identity was done. However, the perception of self, constructed by emic as well as ethic

perspectives is influenced by different structures and processes and reshaped accordingly (Harris in Aydın, 2005: 145). According to Malesevic, focusing exclusively on agency or actors definitions of the situation moves us away from seeing the bigger (macro) picture which, in this particular case, is decisive for an explanation of ethnic relations (Malesevic, 2004: 74). Individual ethnic identification is strongly limited and influenced by external forces that shape the feasibility of opinions and attractiveness of various ethnicities (Nagel, 1994: 161).

Thus, in order to make an appropriate analysis of Armenian identity, material factors such as social and historical setting, political process, institutions and their reflections on self-positioning of Armenians should be taken into account together with the dialectical process of identification. In this section, the interaction of Armenians with the legal, political process as well as its institutional extensions will be elaborated. The sense of being a member of a minority group as well as a citizen of Turkish republic and the institutional implications of that dilemma on the respondent's daily life constitutes the focus of this part of the study.

4.4. a. Politics: Being Citizen or Minority

According to Brubaker, the modern state may be considered as one of the most crucial agents of identification and categorization. By means of its resources to impose categories and its classificatory schemes, it “.has the power to name, to identify, to state what is what and who is who” (Brubaker, 2004: 42). Thus, those official ethnic categories strengthen ethnic boundaries and reconstruct the meaning of these ethnicities.

Citizenship, as one of the basic categories that state uses to identify people and imposes as a source of belongingness, is determining the legal status of membership of a political community, which in turn concerns individuals having equal rights and duties. Because of the fact that it is associated with member state, it is difficult to assume a kind of denationalized citizenship which in turn shown as pre-requisite for democratization within the national borders by Kadioğlu (2008: 33). Moreover, it is not only a legal status but also an area of political and social action as Keyman claims (2008: 223). At this point, the concept is directly related to the relationship that the actor establishes with the political and public space. Furthermore, as Faulks claims, state citizenship and ethnicity as well as historical evidence cannot be conceptually separated from each other (2000, 46). Thus, despite the supra-ethnic claim of the citizenship principles, the intersection with ethnicity and history inevitably creates tension.

Depending on these assumptions, it will not be unjust to claim that Armenians' status as a citizen is a complicated issue in terms of the gap between *de jure* enrolment and *de facto* implications of their rights and liberties. This gap is a mostly repeated point within the respondent's narratives. The categorization made on types of citizenship may serve to illustrate such difference. Brubaker made a distinction between two kinds of citizenship; French and German model. He argues that French model is based on the acceptance of a set of republican values which stand above religious or ethnic characteristics by the inhabitants of the land; German model is deeply linked with commonality of ethnic and blood ties (Brubaker in Yeğen, 2005: 1990). According to Üstel, although Turkish model of citizenship resemble that of the

French model, some historical implications also indicate German model (Üstel, 1999). On the one hand, Turkish citizenship seems to uncover all ethnic, religious and sectarian differentiations, but on the other hand especially religious emphasis still continued to be used to define the boundaries of Turkish citizenship. From this point of view, like Üstel, Oran evaluates that inclination as the continuation of the “millet status” of Ottoman Empire. The framework of minority status should be drawn by taking into consideration this assumption (Oran, 2004: 166).

Francesco Capotorti, special reporter for United Nations, defined minority group as “A group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a state, in a non-dominant position- whose members- being nationals of the State- posses ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly a sense of solidarity directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religions or language” (1979: 96). Such criteria are usually mentioned in most of the international treaties. However, the minority description of Lausanne Treaty based on being non-Muslim becomes the source of eventual political discomfort among members of Armenian community. On the other hand the status of being a member of minority groups besides bringing some positive rights and liberties, are evaluated as a way to label, stigmatize and disdain members of the group. A considerable number of the respondents usually refer to the negative connotation attached to the concept of minority. They did not want to be called as a member of a minority group but they preferred be called as “Turkish citizen” because the status of being the citizen of Turkish Republic implies

being equally valuable, being valid, in front stage and being part of the majority. One of the mostly repeated connotations of being a minority is being a guest or stranger in Simmel's words (1908). The rejection of the term is expressed as such;

We are one of constituent elements of that country so being labeled as minority is frequently used as being the other. In my point of view, it is a kind of exclusion, a way of labeling (Respondent C).

Despite of a widespread discontent about the term, for few respondents, including especially those originated from İstanbul, the word minority only refers to the number, the scarce population of the members of a group. They evaluate such usage as normal and acceptable.

Minority concept exists in all countries as I know. We constitute a small part of the population. It is not a wrong usage. The important thing is not being few but to represent that community appropriately (Respondent W).

In the above narratives, the acceptance of the legal status was usually associated with the interchangeable usage of ethnicity and religion. In most of the narratives, the respondents used the term minority as Christian minority rather than Armenian one. This self-identification may be seen as a way of getting rid of the negative connotation of being a member of a different ethnic group. One of the respondents, discontent of that usage exemplifies such tendency by establishing a link between the political status, its usage in public institutions, and the section of religion on identity card.

Rather than being a member of the Armenian community people prefer to use the word Non-Muslim group. That is more easily expressed. Being a non-Muslim is like a refuge in order not to mention our ethnicity. That is also used in public institutions and indicated in our identity card as well. Because being a member of one of four Abrahamic religions is much

more acceptable than the taboo of being Armenian (Respondent B).

Acceptance of the term is proven by the respondents' views about the existence of the section of religion in identity cards. On the one hand, nearly all of the respondents evaluated the existence of such section as an unnecessary application. Some of them even defined it as a type of labeling or a discriminatory practice. On the other hand, only a few of the respondents argued that as Christianity is an important part of their identity, a way of self-definition, and a source of pride, they do not find such application objectionable. Some perceive it as a necessity for practical reasons in order to make a kind of legal categorization clarifying the population of different groups: "I think there should be a section of religion. By hiding it you do not give rights to the people. Why are we annoyed of that application? We should not" (Respondent D). It is noticeable that apart from one respondent, no respondent mentioned the priority attributed to ethnicity over religion on self-identification.

It is not a negative thing, to define the population that may be necessary but why should I be defined by my religion. My ethnic identity should be written there if it will be accepted as something normal and natural and I will not be discriminated of course (Respondent B).

As indicated above by respondent B, people try to get rid of negative implications of the term minority by using the term Christianity instead. This may be seen as a strategy to be incorporated into the political structure. Furthermore, some of the respondents were discontent about the evaluation of such legal status as a source of priority by the rest of the population.

Minority is a group of people, who is free to use their social rights and liberties, free to practice their traditions without disturbing others of course. If you pose a different cultural, communal structure from the rest of the society, additional arrangements should exist to help you to maintain that structure. It shouldn't be seen as a priority and extra rights, which other groups do not have, by the rest of the society. Oppositely, there are many things that the majority is allowed to do and minority is not (Respondent D).

According to Kymlicka, it is difficult to imagine a de-nationalized, de-ethnicized nation-state, “the viability of national minorities’ societal cultures may be undermined by economic and political decisions made by the majority” (1995: 109). Relative to that, believing to the sufficiency of citizenship rights for minority groups or adopting that “benign neglect” strategy, seems unrealistic (Kymlicka, 2005: 107-108). Therefore, the additional arrangements referred above by the respondent D are necessary to give minorities the opportunity to express themselves openly and practice freely their cultural specialties. These group-differentiated rights as called by Kymlicka, is a way to compensate for the unequal position of the minorities within society (Kymlicka, 1995: 109).

The Lausanne Treaty gave these group-differentiated rights to members of three non-Muslim minority groups together with citizenship rights. The articles of Lausanne Treaty about the protection of minority rights (37- 45) signify that members of minority groups will be free to work in all kinds of jobs, free to open social, economical, and charity foundations, to organize prayers in their native languages, and receive a share from various budgets for cultural and educational purposes (Yumul, 2005: 89). Historical evidence has shown that these group specific rights are not applied as they were written in

the document. With conjectural changes, state policies evolved in opposite directions. First of all, the articles of the law about the criteria for being state officer that was promulgated in 1926 include the condition of being Turk instead of being a Turkish citizen for working as a state officer (Aktar in Yeğen, 2005: 113). Although the law was abolished in 1965, its impact is still perceived as referred by many respondents. The general opinion is that if they apply for that kind of job such as military officer or public officer in ministries they will not be accepted.

I am a good Turkish citizen. Who is a citizen? It is the one who accomplishes his duties appropriately. I pay my taxes, I completed my military services. I did and will do my best for my country but I should have a right to choose my job. I am a disciplined and severe person. If I had a chance, I would be a good army officer, a general perhaps. Why would I deal with commerce, why would I take risks in commerce? I could be very successful; my nature was convenient for that job. Unfortunately we can't be I don't know if it is right to mention here but, I don't understand the reason behind such distrust on us (Respondent I).

The indication of respondent I about the association of rights and duties and the gap between the two is another frequently expressed point within the narratives.

I even declare the amount of money I take as a tip from the weddings, funerals or baptizing and pay its taxes. How many people do such things, I wonder...I am an equal citizen of this country, I completed my military services and I pay my taxes. Then, I should be a governor of a district or a military officer. When you look at numbers, there are a few people who work in public sector. Even if they are admitted to these jobs, it is due to their special skill. If they quit their jobs, it would be difficult to replace them. That's all (Respondent J).

According to Oran, the general idea about this issue is that, as there is no restriction at all, the reason behind the small number of people

from minority groups working in public sector is their non-willingness to work in these kinds of jobs (Oran, 2004: 91). Some of the narratives include such indication about the preference of these jobs but they are mostly related to doubts they have about the environment they would work. “I don’t know whether somebody from us would tend to work in that kind of job or not...I don’t think so” in some of the narratives, the respondents claimed. Depending on that, as Oran argues abolishment of the civil servant law does not lead to the abolishment of judgment in peoples minds. He argues that some of verbal laws are much more practiced than written ones (Oran: 2004, 95).² Thus, although this law is no longer in use, the current situation shows that it works as before. Armenians internalized it in such a way that they correlate not being a state officer and being an artisan. They claim that this restriction may be seen as an advantage for discovering and using their artistic skills.

Besides the issue of job restrictions, the non-application of articles about community foundations was at the center of the narratives. As suggested in the previous parts of the study, Christianity together with Armenian language are two basic providers of Armenian identity. So, Armenian foundations including schools and Churches are crucial for the maintenance of Armenian identity. With the application of the 1936 Declaration in the 1970s which restricted the right of foundations to acquire immovable properties, Armenian foundations have lost important economic resources for their sustainability. Oran claims that “no matter how these properties were acquired (Purchase, donations, lottery,

² Translated by the author

inheritance, etc.), expropriations went ahead, despite the fact that they were in violation of the Lausanne treaty” (Oran: 2007, 36).³ Depending on that, the lack of budgetary support of the state to community schools and Churches were mentioned as main problems for the respondents. Furthermore, the claims of the respondents indicate the deficiencies of religious and linguistic education of Armenians. Together with the absence of Armenian language and Christian theology in university departments in order to train teachers for these schools, the inability of the community to make independent elections for the representatives of their foundations were reported as some of the obstacles for the sustainability and continuity of Armenian identity by the respondents.

Facilities to maintain our culture were not provided since long time. Now the conditions were improved. We can't educate teachers of Armenian language, and man of religion. There is no branch of Armenian philology in Universities. I think a department is now opened in Ankara but I am not sure. This is also ironic. There are few Armenians living in Ankara. There is no educational institution to educate man of religion. Our patriarch proposed many documents for that issue many times to presidents, prime ministers; Ahmet Necdet Sezer, Tansu Çiller, Bülent Ecevit, Tayyip Erdoğan. Only Erdoğan Teziç dealt seriously with the issue but when he retired the process stopped. Fortunately, many positive attempts occur and still occurring during the new government period (Respondent J).

To sum up, the collective memory of the Armenian community is full of such state applications which have both a strengthening and silencing impact on Armenian identity. Besides these political applications and restrictions, opportunities offered by the social, political

³ Translated by the author

as well as economic structure have significant influence on Armenian identity in Turkey. These factors will be dealt in detail in the next part of the chapter.

4.4. b. Reflections of dual status: society versus state

Daily life interactions and the sense of belongingness to the nation-state redraw ethnic boundaries of communities. State policies and socialization process under the impact of these policies may be mentioned as the reasons behind the redrawing of boundaries of Armenian identity as in the case of the Armenians in Turkey. According to the narratives, the respondents made a clear-cut distinction between their relations with state, in other words with the visible branches of the state and the population as a whole. The sense of being a minority is not deeply felt during the routine interactions of the respondents within the society. They do not usually face discrimination or maltreatment in that inner circle. Still, when they go outside the familiar circle, alienation within the society becomes inescapable. The 1936 Declaration about the non-Muslim foundations, Capital Tax, and Civil Service Law forbidding minorities from employment in civil and military services and the Incidence of Reserves requiring minorities to perform military services are some of the policies whose implications contributed to the socialization process of the Armenians in Turkey.

The respondents of this study did not experience these events first hand but still, their narrative include some experiences in which they are

forced to feel as a member of a minority group in public institutions. They especially feel as a foreigner while pronouncing their name in public institutions like the Directorate of Population or judiciary institutions. Most of them avoid going to public institutions in case they are not obliged to. They prefer to stay away from political activities and to live prudently and silently as a “simple citizen” as one of the respondents claimed. Schools and military services are frequently mentioned as places where Armenians face some kind of exclusion.

First, the respondents had some negative experiences about their Armenian identity at schools according to their narratives. Especially religion lessons in public schools and history courses in both community and public schools as well have some negatives traces in the memory of the respondents.

The content of history books representing Armenians as traitors, demonstrations representing the clashes with Armenian gangs in national ceremonies, documentaries about the atrocities of Armenians screened in high schools, humiliating speeches of some teachers, and the pressure of some religious teachers on their preference of religion are mostly repeated themes by the respondents.

I have so many friends, I haven't experienced any discriminatory practices from them but when I was a child in school, I remember that I heard some words like, Armenians collaborated with enemies, they were traitors, and my soul was injured then. Of course there is a history but hearing such things... We are already a few, and these discourses others us, political attempts support that process (Respondent C).

It depends on the persons working in those institutions. For instance, some people behave so kindly that you are even surprised of that. Then, in the same school, another person may embarrass you enormously. When I was studying at Bakırköy Vocational High School, our religion teacher was forcing me to participate to his classes although I didn't have to. He put the whole class aside and focused on me, forcing me to change my religion (Respondent M).

As expressed in the theoretical framework of the study, these symbolic activities practiced at schools may be seen as a way to establish a power relation, a relation of domination and subordination which draw the boundaries between Turkish and Muslim identities. According to Maleseviç, these symbolic practices have a deep impact on people's feelings due to their irrationality and their association with to the real or imaginary objects (2004: 115). As mentioned in the narrative above such impact is usually felt by the respondents.

On the other hand, in some cases, the narratives of the respondents included a totally opposite reaction from the state officials. Such expression of well-behaving of state officials described by the respondents, may serve to prove the distinction the Armenians make between the state and ordinary people. While some of the respondents were content with this attitude, a considerable number thought that such exaggerated attentiveness about their identity seemed to be artificial. They especially pointed out to the cases when their positive rights were expressed as a kind of favor given to the minorities.

The term tolerance mentioned in some of the narratives is important in interpreting such behavior in public institutions. Kymlicka claims that tolerance for the minorities can be implied in various ways. He describes these ways as such; First, it may be established after a long state of war due to the

disgust of clashing. Also, it may be applied in a state of benign neglect interpreted Kymlicka. Thirdly, despite of the non-willingness, tolerance is accepted in principle as a way to show mercy to subordinate group. Fourth type is the one which is the consequence of openness, curiosity, and respect towards the other (Kymlicka: 2005: 107-108). Thus, the reason beyond the discontent of some of the respondents may be explained by the second and third type of tolerance including a power relation between the subordinate and superordinate groups. In other words, being tolerated due to the official status of minorities implies a relation of power which a considerable number of the respondents are displeased with. The respondents' problems about the content of religion and history courses, and demands mentioned above may be related to the rare usage of the fourth type of tolerance. This wish to be equal as well as different is also mentioned by the respondents in various parts of the field research.

Together with school, the second institution in which some of the respondents encountered maltreatment is the military. Although a structural tendency was not mentioned, disturbing behaviors against Armenians in times of political crisis were narrated by some of the respondents. One of the respondents gave an example of that kind of behavior during his military service he accomplished after the 1980 coup d'état,

I faced huge discrimination during my military service. I was a soldier during the Kenan Evren period. At that time Turgut Özal was the prime minister and our brigade commander was Çevik Bir. Imagine my military service then... When inconvenient, suspected soldiers were asked to come forward, I and members of the leftist organizations like Dev-Yol and TIKKO were referred to. Those people were my friends, they were brilliant boys individually, they were tortured, they had many painful experiences... On one hand, although I think they devoted

themselves to wrong ideas, I respect them so much. But on the other hand, legally they were criminal and I was sharing the same status with them for my Armenian identity (Respondent J).

Despite such experiences, military and state in general are mentioned as some of the most trusted institutions by the respondents. The views of the respondents about the state were complex. Sorrow mixed with a sense of attachment was perceived within the narratives. On one hand, the state was described as a father who, instead of accomplishing his duties and organizing the lives of his children, plays of against each other. On the other hand, the sense of belongingness to the land, mixed with the dependency on the state was expressed by the narrative of the priest. He said that the Armenians express their sense attachments to the state even while praying for the state and the land they live in (Respondent J).

One of the respondent's claims about the court cases of Armenians from Turkey in the European Court of Human Rights clarifies such complex position.

Since when do the children put their father into trial? Such behavior is unacceptable according to our values, our upbringing. But the father in turn, should fairly give his children their rights (Respondent I).

Relatively, it seems unsurprising that, when they were asked to tell the institution they mostly trust upon, part of the respondents named the state in general. Another part highlighted the necessity and inevitability to trust the state where they live. However, a general sense of distrust was not expressed against any specific institution of the state by the majority of the respondents.

Besides state institutions, the media was approached with doubt by the respondents especially in terms of triggering prejudices and nationalism.

4.4. c. Political Representation, Political Tendencies and Occupation

Political representation, as a way to be recognized as a citizen and express demands from the state is also crucial in evaluating the perception of Armenian identity for the community.

First of all, although the respondents did not refer to group representation by a party based on Armenian identity, it was noticeable that nearly all of the respondents believe that they were not presented politically in the parliament as a community as well as an individual. Some of them generalize this problem of non-representation by claiming that all of the citizens of the Turkish republic, even the members of the majority group have such a problem. They refer to the small number of Armenians in municipality councils and claim that Armenians may only be elected in local administrative units in some of the districts in İstanbul where they are concentrated such as Bakırköy, Adalar, or Feriköy, Şişli.

Furthermore, only six of the respondents mentioned the necessity of an Armenian deputy who could represent the interests of the Armenians. The rest of the respondents did not make a distinction between an Armenian deputy and another deputy from a different ethnic group to represent them. As mentioned previously, Armenians are discontent about being misrecognized by the majority. Thus, the important thing for the respondents is that whether the deputies are able to represent the Armenian community in the right way as a whole. The ideas of a respondent about an Armenian deputy candidate from the

Nationalist Action Party expressed the doubts about being misrepresented. She claimed that despite of his ethnic origin he does not represent the Armenians in his discourse (Respondent S). Thus, it may be said that the ideological position of the party is more important for determining the voting patterns of Armenians besides the ethnic roots of the candidates.

One of the respondent narratives about the issue of representation indicates the controversy the Armenians have in their minds about the issue and the boundaries of us and them, A tacit acceptance of standing outside the majority, being an outsider, is expressed in the narrative mentioned below.

Although there is no strict restriction, we can't be deputies. It should be. In the Iranian parliament there are many Armenians. But it is true that we are a small group, 40,000 in a 70 million populations so people may think that representing that minor group doesn't make a difference. It is not necessary to let others to come inside for that aim (Respondent R).

Besides the insufficiency of parliamentary representation, lack of a civil representative of the community is another problem. Because of such a lack, the patriarch who is a religious leader takes the role of a civil representative. This duality of civil as well as religious representation is also reaffirmed by a member of the patriarch interviewed during the fieldwork.

The respondents evaluate patriarchy as a basic representative of the community to express the problems and demands of the community to the local and national administrators. Despite its crucial role as an intermediary between political authorities and the community, patriarch's authority is not enough to take on the responsibilities attached to him according to the narratives. "In the past, we had a council to organize the issues about the community, to control it.

The members were elected democratically but after 1960 with the new constitution it is closed” (Respondent I).

If the community is unable to bring up a societal leader for themselves, the ecumanic has to undertake such a societal role. These people have so many problems to be solved but they don't have much power to do so. For instance, they should even give account for a song sang in an Armenian school. That's why they usually die in an early age (Respondent R).

Although analyzing the political inclinations in deep goes beyond the limits of this study, depending on the tendencies referred to during the interviews and on a study made by Komşuoğlu, a general framework can be drawn. Such details are important to analyze the self- positioning of Armenians in the larger society.

Komşuoğlu claims that, one of the basic impacts of historical experiences is mostly perceived through the negative attitudes of İstanbul-originated upper class and middle-aged Armenians towards the Republican People's Party (Komşuoğlu, 2007: 153). In many narratives, such tendency may be easily read between the lines. The events of single party period such as the Capital Levy or Incidences Reserves still occupy a big place in their memories. Since then the Armenian community, mostly composed of traders and artisans, began supporting right wing parties. The nomination of Armenian deputies from Democrat Party lists and the policies of Democrat Party to enhance liberal economy were the first reasons behind that support. This tendency to stand by the political parties which deal with economic issues as well as their current communal problems still continues. A considerable part of the respondents referred to the performance of the Justice and Development Party and claimed that they appreciate the services they accomplished for their community. That

tendency and their expectancy from the party is emphasized by one of the respondents, who is a member of the biggest Armenian Foundation in İstanbul as such,

I talked with one of the primary deputies of a political party and asked him if they want to be supported by the votes of our community. I told him if it is the case, they can charge one of their deputies to consult the members of our foundation and to listen to their problems. And if such a service is given, they will support the party in turn. He answered that it is a good idea and said that deputy could be one of you. I in turn asked him if there was such a thing like you and us, it makes no difference; he will be a representative of the whole society. He rejected that and said yes, but it is your right, you are a member of a minority, you have to be represented. We are again minority, not an ordinary citizen (Respondent I).

In the above narrative, the complex position of being a minority as well as a citizen is also re-emphasized by the complaints of the respondent. Despite of the general inclination towards the Justice and Development Party due to the developments about the Foundations, part of the respondents, who react against increasing conservatism, appeared to support the Republican Peoples Party. Besides, a small number of the respondents who may be defined as a more politicized group positioned themselves with more leftist parties in the political scale.

As mentioned above these political tendencies of the respondents are also closely related to their occupational status. The duality of being an Armenian as well as a member of the Turkish society is also perceived in the narratives about the occupations of the respondents. Relative to that, it may be claimed that Armenians identity, especially of those working as an artisan or trader in the Grand Bazaar, is on a constant process of re-identification. Together with their interethnic relations established in their work place,

changing circumstances cause a variation in the position of Armenian ethnic identity. For instance, using Turkish names in stead of Armenian ones may be evaluated as a strategy for an easier incorporation. The respondents explain such a tendency by claiming that it is much easier for Turkish co-workers to pronounce Turkish names in stead of Armenian ones. As Barth claims such an attempt of non-articulation may reduce negative connotations and facilitate broader participation to the economic sectors (Barth: 1969: page number). On the other hand, it is not totally just to reduce that behavior to rational choice and to Armenian identity. Rather, it may be seen as a temporary arrangement.⁴

Together with their legal status, political representation, economic position, and the European Union process may be listed as important litmus papers for Armenian identity perception. On one hand, the European Union is evaluated as an opportunity to develop democracy and human rights by most of the respondents. On the other hand, the European Union is criticized for applying a double standard for Turkey's accession process. Apart these remarks and apart from the distinction between being pro-European or not, a considerable number of the respondents refers to the boundaries between us and them, i.e. the members of the Turkish Republic and members of European countries. The necessity to solve the problems within the boundaries, including improving the living conditions and the rights and liberties of all citizens, and not reflecting Turkey's deficits to the others were the mostly repeated themes

⁴ For more information about Armenian artisan in Grand Bazaar; Çörek, Ç. (2011). Is jewelry still a craft? the role of trust and work ethic in jewelry sector: the case of Istanbul Grand Bazaar. Published Master Thesis, Sociology: METU, Ankara.

by the respondents. The EU process together with the new developments about the Kurdish issue as well as about the Armenians and other identity issues are evaluated as positive developments. However, nearly none of the respondents declare a clear-cut hope about the results of these attempts.

All of these comments indicate the sense of being an Armenian is mixed with the sense of being a Turkish citizen which is reshaped through some structural necessities. Yumul labels such picture as “Weak Multiculturalism”, which is a term used by Shachar (Yumul: 2005: 90). According to Kukathas, in case of weak multiculturalism, “there is a tendency to conformity that is as difficult to eradicate as is the inclination of some individuals to go in a different direction. And for reasons of expediency or prudence, newcomers or minorities in any society will be inclined to follow the dominant norms simply because it makes life easier, less costly or more enjoyable (Kukathas: 1992: 7). This is why self-identification of the respondents cannot be thought without taking into account the dominant norms and structures of the society as a whole.

To sum up, in this part of the chapter, the dilemma of being both a citizen and a minority, the Armenians’ perception about the distinction between the state and society, and the emergent structural factors causing them to emphasize their Armenian identity more were the issues dealt with.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

According to Leyla Neyzi, identity in Turkey is a kind of performance which varies depending on space and time. She claims that in Turkey, as a location where there is a multicultural tradition, identity has not only been inherited but also it is a part of the deliberate elaboration of the self (Neyzi, 2001: 196). In other words, identity in Turkey should be evaluated as a construction which individuals borrow from their ethnic belongingness together with freely choosing among alternative identities. Evaluation of an individual or a group from a different religion or a different ethnicity from the majority of the population, holding a deep rooted historical legacy with the population and / or territory make it difficult to evaluate competing identities in Turkey. Relative to that, studying Armenian identity in Turkey necessitates dealing with a multi-layered structure and processes as well. The starting point of the thesis was to unveil these layers by means of self-perceptions of the respondents. Because of that, before beginning to construct the framework of the study, the above mentioned dimensions were taken into consideration. In this context, the ethno-religiosity of Armenian identity, the poly-ethnic structure of Turkey and the impact of encounters with different ethnicities, the trans-national relations of Armenians of Turkey, and holding a minority status in a nation-state were used as the benchmarks of Armenian identity in Turkey.

The main theoretical framework of the study was based on the symbolic and constructed facets of ethnic identity and the process within which ethnic identity is reformed. The primordial characteristic of an ethnic group was also taken into account within the theoretical basis of this thesis. Similarity as well as difference-based approaches and external-factor based explanations for the creation, recreation, change, and survival of Armenian identity was discussed to encompass the picture as a whole. Perception of homeland, of community, of others, and of citizenships constituted the main debates of the study. It should be noted that these perceptions of the respondents were strongly influenced by their personal or familial experiences, place of origin, age, occupational status, and gender as well.

First of all, attachment to a homeland, the place it occupies in the collective memory of Armenians and the impact of traumas on the perception of identity of Armenians were handled. Smith's theorization of homeland, memory and ethno-religiosity about the Armenians intersected with the data gathered from the field. His definition of ethno-scape as "the unique and indispensable setting for events that shape the community" fits with Armenians perception of homeland (Smith, 1999: 150). For Armenians interviewed, their homeland, a place where a group of people established their ethnic identification signifies, is perceived to be Anatolia. Due to the historical ties Armenians have with and the memories it evokes in their minds, Anatolia is considered as the cradle of Armenian identity by all of the respondents. Even most of the youngest respondents identify themselves with the hometown of their father's and mother's. Being from Anatolia is source of pride for the

Armenians. Nevertheless, they projected the concept of homeland to İstanbul as well as to Turkey as a whole. After the dispersion of Armenians through the world, İstanbul became a secondary homeland, a place of refuge, reconciliation for Anatolia-origin Armenians where they try to re-establish their communal bounds, to re-flourish their culture and to compensate their sense of uprootedness. It was also remembered as a transfer point for those Armenians who migrated to European countries.

The field of the research, Yeşilköy was defined by respondents as one of the few districts in İstanbul which allows Armenians to maintain their Armenian identity by means of the physical as well as psychological opportunities it offers. Churches, schools, foundations, and a populous community of Armenians living in the district are mentioned as some of the elements which serve to carry on Armenian identity and communal life. This concentration of Armenian population in some of the districts of İstanbul may also be mentioned as a source of belongingness to the place lived in. The discontent of the respondents about being labeled as a foreigner or as a citizen of Armenia is another indicator of perception of homeland. Armenia as a newly established state stands outside the world of meanings of many respondents. Respondents only evaluated Armenia as a place where their co-ethnics live. A sense of pity mixed with a hope to find traces from the past were perceived in their narratives about Armenia

Besides the relation of homeland, Smith's ethno-symbolist perspective is also necessary to form a bridge between the past, the present and the future of Armenian community in Turkey. It establishes a direct link between

memory and homeland of Armenians. Recalling of memories by means of territory called as “territorialization of memory” by Smith (2004: 75) and transmission of these memories serves to the construction of ethnic identity.

Smith evaluates myths-memories as parts of conscious artifice rooted in history which constitutes the *raison d'être* of an ethnic or a nation. Respondents refer to these myths of origin, myths of migration, myth of ethnic election, attachment to a homeland and memories of golden age and decline and revival in their narratives as in Smith's analysis. Senses of nostalgia for the good old past, multicultural peaceful atmosphere, and happy memories with the relatives who migrated from these lands are the themes usually referred by the respondents. Importance attached to the belief in a common descent, to being the first nation who accepted Christianity, to the collective traumas of migratory waves, and to the sense of being dispersed through the world may be shown as touchstones in Armenian identity. Without neglecting the situationalist perspective, the narratives indicated that Armenian identity is especially maintained and reconstructed through to the transmission of the myths, memories and symbols as well as of primary cultural features such as language and religion. The study indicated that although ethno-religiosity is an important constituent of Armenian identity, its priority and degree depends on other situational factors as well. Christianity is considered as the basic part of Armenian identity and is much more influential in the respondents' life than their Armenian ethnic ties. That difference is reflected in self-naming of individuals. Even their preference of the term which should be written in their identity cards reflects the priority of religion for their identity. Most of them prefer to be named as Christian rather than Armenian. Among the memories

which contributed to the identity reconstruction process of Armenians, openly mentioned or not, the 1915 relocation and the tragedy it accompanied appears to play a decisive role. That event still signifies a break up point and a major point of reference in the identity of the respondents who migrated from the Eastern parts of Anatolia. While some of the respondents expressed openly the memories they recollected from others, part of them prefer hiding or forgetting them. From that perspective, it can be concluded that, *collective forgetting* or *mourning with trauma* are some of the instruments used by Armenians' collective memory as a means to deal with trauma. On the one hand, the respondents, as opposed to diaspora's continuous melancholia, prefer to accept the trauma and to live without being obsessed about the losses caused by that trauma. On the other hand, although interviewer's identification with these memories and myths seems not so much in use as Smith claims, it may be said that these past experiences more or less contribute to the awareness, sustainability or alternation of Armenian identity.

Armenians, one of the oldest ethnies as labeled by Smith, hold a large cultural and symbolic repertory with them. This heritage together with memories and myths constitutes another building block of Armenian identity. In the study, Cohen's similarity based approach of symbolic construction of community was used to illustrate the reconstruction of Armenianness by the respondents. Despite the fact that most of the Armenians interviewed did not want to use the word community because of its non-secular connotation, their sense of attachment, concentration of population, and their daily activities indicate such a communal way of living. Armenians as a community attach a

considerable importance to religious rituals, fetes, ceremonies, and cultural practices. It should be noticed that priority of religion for the community contributes to the application of these ceremonies. The usage of these symbolic elements is also useful to deal with the self-identification of the respondents. Besides this application, the transgenerational transfer of cultural practices occupies an important place in the ethnic identification process of Armenians. At that point, rather than man working in public space, women, the border guard of private space, take the role of the cultural bearer and culture transmitter. That responsibility is reflected as kind of burden by some of the respondents. Communal life is reflected both as a kind of refuge to protect themselves from harsh daily life conditions and as a source of blockage for the individuals. Although the existence of such burden is shared by many respondents, attempts to find a personal space within the community or to stay a bit away from the community about some issues are mentioned within the narratives. Relative to that, the field research has shown that although these symbolic elements create a world of similarities, they do not impose strict meanings for all of the members of the community. In other words, it opens a space for diversity within the community.

That point intersects with Cohen's approach of community including the co-existence of similarities and differences within. On the other hand, symbols contribute to the sense of solidarity of a community which encounters diverse communities. This encounter with others and its implication on ethnic identification process occupy a large place in the study. The Barthian concept of boundary which is also used by Cohen served to illustrate the significance of

others for the construction of an Armenian identity. That concept is also useful to explain the changing cultural traits and the transfer of them among the communities. However, the maintenance of boundaries which encompasses cultural traits, are described as a crucial condition for the survival of identity. Commonness of self-definition and of some cultural characteristics seems sufficient in that case. Respondents' self-labeling and unity of many practices, many symbolic boundary mechanisms fit with that picture of maintenance of boundaries. Such maintenance is usually broken up with mixed marriages and children born out of these marriages according to the respondents. Although some degree of hybridity is welcomed and internalized, marriage is like a touchstone. Even those respondents which seem to be more open-minded and least traditional approve such opinion. That signifies the continuing priority given to primordial characteristics such as blood ties and religion. While looking at the big picture, the differentiation they made between themselves, other minority groups, and between Armenians in Armenia and diaspora Armenians emphasize their sense of identification. Although the respondents differentiated themselves strictly from the diaspora Armenians and from the Armenians of Armenia, they stand as an outside circle and as a constituent part of Armenian identity. At that point, Armenians of Armenia coming to Turkey for working in domestic jobs have a crucial impact in the self-positioning of respondents. On one hand, most of the women interviewed prefer to recruit women coming from Armenia to look after their children. Women's role of cultural bearer is than re-emphasized by an Armenian babysitter at house. Depending on that, it may be said that, a kind of a cultural bond is currently established with Armenia by means of these new comers on basis of ethnic

roots. On the other hand, those Armenians coming to Turkey from Armenian are evaluated as a point of reference for their distinctiveness from Turkish Armenians. That picture is reflects the multi-layers of Armenian identity.

It should be noted that the existence of others of Armenians does not necessary draw a conflicting or contrasting picture. Eriksen (2004: 29) points out that “ethnic identity both entails the establishment of both Us–Them contrast (dichotamization) *and* a shared field for interethnic discourse and interaction (complementarization) “. In Armenian case these two processes co-exist.

Until the last part of the field analysis, the deep influence of external and internal dialectics of identification is discussed. Encounters with the state, its institutions and its enforcements which are also definitive for the self-positioning of Armenians in Turkey are discussed in the last part. The starting point for the relations with the state is the dilemma of being both a minority and a citizen of the Turkish state for most of the respondents. The attribution of ethnic meaning to Turkish citizenship and some of the laws which suit with that attribution as well as the subordinate position that minority status causes are the sources of discontent among the Armenians. Although the respondents accept the nominal explanation of their legal status which brings them some additional rights, they claim that it became a source of labeling and stereotyping during the historical process. On the one hand, state institutions, historical events as well as the media were pointed out as the main creators of these collective representations such as prejudices. On the other hand, the respondents did not make a clear-cut description of a discriminatory practice

stemming from their minority status. Only a continuous sense of sourness towards the state was felt in the narratives of the respondents. The state being described as a father to whom all of his children need to trust in a way reflects the complex feelings towards the state.

Such complexity is recovered by the newly used concept of *Türkiyelilik* (being from Turkey). On one hand, the attachment to the land and cultural commonness, and belief in such commonness may be perceived as the foundation of such concept throughout the interviews. Armenian identity was usually defined by the respondents as parts of Anatolian culture mixed with other cultures in the same soils. Such mixing and the current cultural interaction between different groups created a place in Armenian identity where multiple identities may co-exist. From that point, applying some of the traditions of Turkish or Muslim groups, participating in some of their religious holidays, learning how to read the Qu'ran is perceived as an element of their daily life routine, as a dimension of the hybrid culture of the Armenians of Turkey. Besides, the upper identity of being one of the constituents of the Turkish Republic and being a defender of the republican idea is also part of the discourse of commonality that some of the respondents hold on to.

While taking into account this position Armenians hold, the field work indicates a common wish to be recognized appropriately, to be treated as equals with their differences rather than to be treated as strangers. Depending on that, current interest in ethnic identities leading to re-evaluation of Armenian identity was mostly criticized by many respondents. That includes the discontent of being recognized only by food, music and other cultural

features. As a superficial way to tolerate others, rather than learn about and understand them, Stanley Fish's approach of "boutique multiculturalism" fits with such a picture according to Yumul (2005: 97). Bilal claims that in the discourse about disappearing colors of Anatolia, minority groups became visible in public by their consumable elements such as food and music. They become depoliticized and thus, the suspected dangerous non-visible elements and problems stayed out of public interest⁵ (Bilal, 2008: 243). One of the respondent's expressions is important for highlighting the case,

It won't just claim that all of us are the same, because we are not. My Armenianness is written in my identity card as well as on me. Let me tell you a joke. One Armenian man has gone to the USA in the 1940s. People he met said hi (pronounced like Hay in Armenian language which means the Armenian nation) to him. He was very surprised to be recognized that he is from the Hay nation. This is the reality. All of the existing problems can only be solved by admitting such reality at first (Respondent B).

The narrative above includes many clues for summarizing the self-definition of the respondents. From the beginning, the concept of Armenian nation is not used very frequently for the self-definition of Armenians in Yeşilköy. Nevertheless, it may be claimed that holding Armenian ethnic ties, being both a part of historical Armenian nation, Chosen People as labeled by Smith, and one of the basic elements of Anatolian culture and of the Republic of Turkey shape the multi-layers of Armenian identity in Turkey. Together with these multiple segments of Armenian identity, the perception of that identity by the Armenians is also diverse. The priority they attribute to these definitions, the way they identify themselves, and the value they attach to the

⁵ Translated by the author

primordial features of their identity as well, depend on the context lived in and on the personal history of the respondents. Still, the data acquired from the field allowed to refer to overall tendencies about the respondents' identity perceptions and to establish some minor links between their perception and their daily life practices and their personal histories as well.

First of all, place of origin was a fundamental distinguishing mark of the respondents. Being an İstanbul-origin or an Anatolia-origin Armenian, being from eastern or central Anatolia influences the respondents' identity perception. On the one hand, the existence of educational institutions in İstanbul as well as the existing communal life triggered learning and transmission of language and traditions for those who were brought up there. On the other hand, the respondents who did not have an opportunity to live a communal life in Anatolia during their childhood emphasized more the necessity of protecting Armenian culture and traditions for the survival of Armenian identity. They are much more inclined to transfer cultural values to their children (by sending their children to Armenian schools and by taking them to communal ceremonies). Diversity of historical experiences of those from Anatolia and those from İstanbul is also a differentiating factor for Armenian identity. The impact of the 1915 relocation is deeply felt by the Anatolia-origin Armenians which in turn became part of their collective history and their identification process. Events like the Capital Levy, Incidence of Reserves, and 6-7 September events which have an impact on Armenians in big cities, especially in İstanbul, contributed to the "closeness" of the community or at least to the silent expression of their Armenian identity. These

events have led to migration to other countries. As a result the number of İstanbul-origin Armenians decreased relatively. Among the respondents, few of them labeled themselves as İstanbul-origin Armenians.

So, it is not wrong to claim that historical events had a multi-sided effect on Armenian identity according to the narratives. The sense of belongingness of individuals created different branches of Armenians identity. Two types of tendencies are perceived within the narratives. The smallest part of the respondents is much more politicized; they refer to their ethnic identity more easily and openly. They give priority to their legal rights and liberties for community's survival over symbolic practices. They routinely read Armenian newspapers, at least *Agos* which is in Turkish. Citizenship as well as *Türkiyelilik* (being from Turkey) is crucial concepts in their self-definition. The other part, much more numerous, are those less ambitious about expressing their Armenian identity openly in public space and inclined to express their identity by means of Christianity as well as Turkishness. On one hand, they are much more bounded to Armenian traditions and in favor of the closeness of their community. On the other hand, they seem to internalize the broader socio-economic and political structure in Turkey.

Besides, being an Armenian women, the cultural bearer, the guardian of private sphere, stand as basic points of distinction in the identity perception of Armenians. Whether they label themselves as someone attached to traditions or not, Armenian women are much more inclined to transmit the components of Armenian identity to the next generations.

Lastly, the respondents' opinions about the current changes in the political structure and conjecture serve as another indicator of their Armenian identity. European Union process aiming at democratization, new arrangements about the problems of minorities (change of foundation law), and relations with Armenia and diaspora were some of the issues which may serve to mark the Armenian identity of the respondents. In case of international issues, respondents usually positioned themselves in Turkey's side. In other words, it may be said that belongingness to the state gains a priority in such cases. However, the silence of some of the respondents about recent diplomatic conflicts between Armenia and Turkey as well as the current political discussions about these issues signifies the flexible and primordial aspects of Armenian identity.

Moreover, current developments were positively evaluated and the policies of the Justice and Development Party were usually supported and appreciated after a long-lasting period of expectancy from the past governments. Although it seems conflicting, conservatism of the party and its emphasis on religion was another aspect which some of the Armenians associate themselves with. Nevertheless, a considerable part of the respondents were doubtful about that atmosphere of conservatism and referred to the recent assassinations of members of minority groups.

Despite such variables influencing the identity perception of individuals, a clear-cut categorization of the respondents is not easy to make.

First, the difficulty to range the degree of importance attached to the various aspects of Armenian identity such as language, religion, history, culture and territory by the members of the community constitutes an obstacle

for such categorization. The ranks attributed to these markers of distinctiveness of Armenian identity are both fluid and context dependent. However, to an extent, they are all alive, at least at a symbolic level. Thus, on the one hand, it is difficult to argue about a total identity change. On the other hand, the study demonstrated that Armenian ethnic identity is under-communicated in public. What is expressed in public is Turkishness or Christianity. The fluidity of self naming of the respondents may be evaluated as a reflection of context-dependency and as a dynamic character of ethnic identity. However, that character does not signify a kind of identity split. It is rather a kind of co-existence of different components which gain priorities depending on changing conditions, described by Eriksen as “negotiated identities” (2004, 32). New opportunities, occupational status, interests, and political, economic conditions may shape and re-shape the self- perception of Armenian identity. The description of ethnicity by Aydın seems suitable to illustrate the fluidity of Armenian case. He argues that ethnicity may be described as a contextual cultural construction which becomes distinctive in cases one of its characteristics gain priority depending on time and space (Aydın, 2009: 64).⁶

Together with the changing rank of these characteristics, the expectations of Armenians constitute an important indicator of their identity. Disturbance caused by the ethnic emphasis on Turkish citizenship and willingness to feel as part of the whole society seem to clarify the way by which the Armenians want to be integrated into the larger society. Most of the respondents did not want to enclose their Armenian identity in the private

⁶ Translated by the author

sphere and did not want to hide their identity even though they do not express it overly. They wanted to be recognized appropriately; they wanted their differences to be recognized by others rather than being tolerated by them.

To summarize, this study elaborated the rigid and fluid aspects of Armenian identity, by means of the constructivist and primordial models of ethnic identity. Besides, theoretical approaches emphasizing the importance of symbols seemed to be promising for the aim of the study. Differences, commonness and interactions as discussed in this study through the perception of the Armenians were used as a means to elaborate some major theories of ethnicity.

Within this framework, multi-layered Armenian ethnic identity in Yeşilköy was analyzed. Although the variations in the status, occupational position and the daily life anxieties of the respondents can be seen as a shortcoming, the themes that came out in the narratives were consistent with each other. The conclusions in this study cannot be generalized to cover all minority groups in Turkey. However, it does provide important clues about Armenian identity in Turkey. Armenians as a non-Muslim minority group, as a dispersed ethno-religious community, and as one of the constituents of the Turkish society maintain their identity which is both rigid and fluid. Turkish, Anatolian and Armenian cultures were the most emphasized themes which suggest that are all important sources for the preservation and maintenance of their identity. Conflict between cultures was not worded. Instead, continuities and similarities were underlined with reference to a peaceful coexistence of

different cultures in Anatolia. Problems were worded about equal job opportunities, citizenship rights or about some negative attitudes about the Armenians in Turkey. However, these were not listed as areas of conflict but as problems which could be solved eventually.

Armenian identity in Turkey has to be evaluated within the framework of changes and continuities, together with its primordial and constructed features which often intersect depending on context. It is difficult to argue for a unique Armenian identity in Turkey; there are various overlapping Armenian identities.

Ethno-religious belongingness which survives by means of myths and memories constitutes the main part of the continuous aspects of Armenian identity. Moreover, being part of Anatolia and Anatolian culture also contributed to the maintenance and preservation of identity. However, together with primary characteristics, Armenian identity is also socially constructed where we see both acculturation and hybridity. Continuity in the collective memories of communities may be broken by traumatic events. In the Armenian case in Turkey, 1915 seems like causing such a rupture. However, Armenians of Turkey as different from diaspora Armenians, as well as Armenians of Armenia, are mostly inclined to work through the trauma of 1915 to maintain the continuity in their identity and to preserve the bound with the past, present and future.

Among many Armenian communities dispersed around the world, Armenians of Turkey occupy a specific place because of their geographical

proximity to the “ancestral homeland”. This is mixed with the diasporic features they hold as well as with their sense of belongingness to the land where they live now. Although a minority group, they have connections with the members of broader international Armenian community mostly through their relatives which add another dimension to their identity and /or sense of belongingness. Thus, self- positioning of Armenians of Turkey is crucial for evaluating Armenian identity in general; that is all Armenians in the world.

Depending on this multi-sided Armenian identity, this study can be seen as a contribution to the literature on Armenians since it provides information not only about how the Armenians (re)construct their identity in Turkey, but also about how they relate themselves to other Armenian communities in the world.

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APPENDIX A

LIST OF RESPONDENTS

- Respondent A: 70 years old, man, retired trader, director of an Armenian Foundation from Sivas
- Respondent B: 44 years old women, dentist, photographer from Malatya
- Respondent C: 50 years old women, Armenian NGO and newspaper secretary from Elazığ- Sivas
- Respondent D: 41 years old man, ecclesiastic from Sivas
- Respondent E: 38 years old women, consultant from Van
- Respondent F: 36 years old women, housewife from Erzurum
- Respondent G: 36 years old women, house wife from Yozgat
- Respondent H: 48 years old man, shopkeeper from Kastamonu
- Respondent I: 65 years old man, trader, member of an Armenian Foundation from Erzurum
- Respondent J: 40 years old man, priest from Kayseri
- Respondent K: 58 years old man, seller of silverwork from İstanbul
- Respondent L: 54 years old women, housewife from Ankara
- Respondent M: 44 years old women, housewife from Ordu
- Respondent N: 33 years old man, real-estate agent from Sivas
- Respondent O: 29 years old women, real-estate agent from İstanbul
- Respondent P: 40 years old man, pharmacist from İstanbul
- Respondent Q: 40 years old man, artisan Kayseri
- Respondent R: 46 years old man, artisan from Kayseri
- Respondent S: 29 years old women, music teacher from Yozgat-Kayseri
- Respondent T: 37 years old women, English teacher from Malatya
- Respondent U: 34 years old women, secretary from Elazığ
- Respondent V: 62 years old women, housewife from Malatya
- Respondent W: 29 years old man, owner of an antique shop from İstanbul
- Respondent X: 73 years old women, housewife from İstanbul

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1-Kendinizden ve ailenizden bahsedebilir misiniz? (Doğum yeri, tarihi, medeni hal, eğitim, meslek, iş anne- baba-kardeş, kaç senedir İstanbul'da yaşıyor gibi)

2-Ne zamandır Yeşilköy' de yaşıyorsunuz?

3- Aileniz ne zaman nereden Yeşilköy'e taşınmış?

4-Ailenizden başka yerlere göç eden kişiler var mı? Hangi sebeplerle göç kararı aldılar? Nelere göç ettiler?

5- Bu kişilerle bağlantınız ne düzeyde, nasıl iletişim kuruyorsunuz? Türkiye'ye geliyorlar mı?

6-Sizin ya da çocuklarınız böyle bir düşüncesi oldu mu?

7-Türkiye'de yaşamıyor olsaydınız nerede yaşamak isterdiniz?

8-Yeşilköy'de geçmişe göre daha az sayıda Ermeni-Rum- Musevi yaşamakta. Bu durumu nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz? Göçler yaşanmasa idi sizce Türkiye'de neler değişirdi?

9-Sizce Türkiye'nin temel sorunları nelerdir?

10-Geçmişe baktığımız zaman Türkiye'de hangi kurumların ya da fikirlerin-zihniyetlerin değiştiğini ya da aynı kaldığını görüyorsunuz?

11- Türkiye'de en çok güvendiğiniz kişi kurum hangisidir? Nedeni nedir?

12-Gündemdeki açılımları- AB sürecini nasıl derlendiriyorsunuz?

13-Gelecekte nasıl bir Türkiye hayal ediyorsunuz?

14- Geçmişte yaşanan, 1915 olayları, varlık vergisi, 6-7 Eylül olaylarına dair hikayeler dinlediniz mi yakın çevrenizden ailenizden? Anlatabilir misiniz? Bu anlamda ermeni cemaatinde sözlü bir geleneğin yaşadığını düşünüyor musunuz?

- 15-Bu hikayeler sizi ne şekilde etkiledi?
- 16-Aileniz sizi cemaat okullarına göndermeyi mi tercih etti? Neden?
- 17-Siz çocuklarınızı cemaat okullarına göndermeyi tercih ettiniz mi? Neden?
- 18 -Kiliseye ne sıklıkla gidiyorsunuz?
- 19-Evlilik- cenaze törenlerinizi ne şekilde gerçekleştiriyorsunuz?
- 20-Cemaat dışı evliliğe nasıl bakıyorsunuz? Sizce böyle bir karma evlilik yapılmaması kimliğin kültürün korunmasını mı sağlar? Siz evlenirken buna dikkat ederek mi evlendiniz? Karma evliliği yapan kişinin erkek ve ya kadın olması sizce bir şey değiştirir mi?
- 21-Aileniz cemaat dışı evliliğe nasıl bakıyor?
- 22- (Cemaat olarak) Geleneklerinizi canlı tutmak için neler yapıyorsunuz?
- 23-Ermeni cemaatiyle ilişkileriniz ne derece güçlü? Cemaat vakıflarındaki çalışmalara, faaliyetlere katılıyor musunuz? (dayanışma, yardımlaşma kültürel etkinlik gibi)
- 24-Sizce Anadolu ve İstanbul Ermeniliği arasında fark var mı? Ne açıdan?
- 25-Ermeni kültürü deyince aklınıza ne geliyor?
- 26-Haberleri nereden takip ediyorsunuz? Hangi kanalları kullanıyorsunuz?
- 27-Ermenice gazeteleri takip ediyor musunuz, Ermenice kitap okuyor musunuz?
- 28-Çocukluğunuzda aile içinde hangi diller kullanılırdı? Kimlerce?
- 29-Siz Ermeniceyi nerede öğrendiniz? Cemaat okullarının bu noktada önemli olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz?
- 30- Sizce dil ermeni kimliğinin oluşumunda nerede duruyor? Birleştirici bir rol oynadığını düşünüyor musunuz?
- 31-Sizce patriklik makamı ne ifade ediyor? Sadece ruhani bir liderlik mi cemaat liderliği olarak mı görüyorsunuz?
- 32-Sizce din ermeni kimliğinin oluşumunda ermeni kültürünün sürdürülmesinde ne ifade ediyor? Birleştirici bir rol oynadığını düşünüyor musunuz?

33- Sizce Türkiye'deki Ermeni cemaatinin en büyük sorunları nelerdir? Bu sorunlar tarihsel süreçte- zaman içinde değişti mi sizce? Ne açıdan?

34-Sizce Türkiye de Ermeniler kendilerini yeteri kadar ifade edebiliyorlar mı? Geçmişe göre bu durumda bir değişiklik olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz?

35-Başka dinlerden mezheplerden arkadaşlarınız var mı? Onlarla ilişkileriniz nasıl? Bu arkadaşlarınız Ermenileri tanıyorlar mı? Ermeni olduğunuz üzerine konuşuluyor mu?

36- Bir başkasına Ermeni cemaatini anlatmak isterseniz öncelikle hangi özelliklerinden bahsedersiniz?

37-Dünyanın farklı yerlerinde ve Ermenistan'da yaşayan Ermenilerle ve onların yaşantılarıyla ilgili ne düşünüyorsunuz? Onlarla kendinizi hangi noktalarda yakın hangi noktalarda uzak hissediyorsunuz?

38- Kendinizi dünyada yakın hissettiniz bir başka grup toplum ülke var mı?

39-Maddi sıkıntı durumunda borç almanız gerekse öncelikle kimden, hangi kurumdan borç almayı tercih edersiniz kime başvurursunuz?

40-İş ortaklığı yapmanız gerekse ya da yanınızda birini çalıştırmanız gerekse o kişinin dinine mezhebine dikkat eder misiniz?

41-Azınlık kavramını nasıl derlendiriyorsunuz? Sizce bu kavramla ne anlatılmak isteniyor? Azınlık kime denmeli sizce? Bu noktada kendinizi nereye konumlandırıyorsunuz?

42- Bu kavramın kapsamı yüzünden (isminizde vs) sorun yaşadınız mı? (resmi dairelerde ya da gündelik ilişkilerde) olumsuz davranışlarla, sizi üzen ifadelerle karşılaştınız mı? Ne gibi?

43- Bu anlamda toplumda önyargıların var olduğuna ve/ veya eğitim kurumları gibi yapılarda yaratıldığına /pekiştirildiğine inanıyor musunuz?

44-Mesleğinizden memnun musunuz? Değiştirme şansınız olsa idi hangi mesleği yapmak isterdiniz?

45- Meslek seçerken, iş hayatında sıkıntı yaşadınız mı?

46-Gündelik hayatta dinsel, etnik kimliğinizi ne derece yaşayabiliyorsunuz- rahat ifade edebiliyor musunuz? Bu konuda engellerle karşılaştığınızı düşünüyor musunuz- ne açıdan?

47-Kendinizi nasıl tanımlarsınız? (Vatandaşlık, dinsel, etnik açıdan)

48-T.C. Vatandaşı olmak sizin için ne anlam ifade ediyor haklar ve ödevler anlamında?

49 - Mecliste temsil edildiđinizi düşünüyör musunuz cemaat – yurttaş olarak?

50-Bu anlamda bir partinin kurulmasını ister miydiniz? Böyle bir partiden ne beklerdiniz?

51-Okullarda din derslerinin olmasını nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?

52- Nüfus Cüzdanında din hanesinin olmasını nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?

53-Türkiye-Ermenistan ilişkilerinde oluşan kutuplaşmayı nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?