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# “EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED TO THE GENOCIDE.” INTERGENERATIONAL MEMORY, DIASPORA MOBILIZATION, AND ARMENIAN YOUTH IDENTITIES IN JERUSALEM

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Considering commemorative practices of postmemory, past presencing, and transnational memory, this study considers how Genocide memories and the conflict in Artsakh intersect to shape the performance of diasporic Armenian youth identities in Jerusalem as members of a disempowered minority community. Drawing on ethnographic research in Jerusalem’s Armenian School, participant-observation in community events, and interviews with youth and community leaders, this article documents processes of intergenerational memory transmission within educational and community settings and suggests ways in which inherited narratives of victimization find new expressions via transnational acts of citizenship. As Jerusalem’s multilingual Armenian youth engage in commemorative ceremonies and take protests to the streets in acts of diaspora mobilization, memories are (re) interpreted to construct novel identity narratives tied to an imagined Armenian transnation.

**Keywords:** intergenerational memory, Armenian Genocide, diaspora mobilization, youth identity, ethnography

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## **Introduction**

Since the Armenian Genocide's centennial, the entrance to the Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem's Old City has been adorned with a large banner bearing an outline of the Armenian Genocide Memorial complex in Yerevan, the official purple forget-me-not flower emblem, and the slogan "I Remember and Demand" written in Armenian, English, Arabic, and Hebrew. As is the case elsewhere in the diaspora, the Genocide has long been considered a defining symbol of Armenian collective identity within the Jerusalem community. But what are the memories and demands which shape the identities of today's Jerusalemite Armenian youth as members of a marginalized community in Israel? In many ways, this banner represents the multiple facets of Armenian youth identity negotiation in Jerusalem: the historical trauma of the Genocide, the connection to the Armenian homeland, and the demand for recognition faced by a double minority - Armenian Christians living amongst the primarily Muslim Arab minority within a Jewish majority population - in a region plagued by intractable conflict. Against this background, Israel's non-recognition of the Genocide and complicity in recent Azerbaijani aggression during the last Artsakh War further complicates the process of identity negotiation.

Drawing on the theoretical concepts of postmemory, past presencing, and transnational memory as practices of remembering, this study considers how intergenerational memories of the Genocide and the ongoing conflict in Artsakh intersect to shape the performance of diasporic Armenian youth identities in Jerusalem. I first consider how practices of postmemory (ways in which youth relate to trauma endured by their ancestors) and past presencing (how youth perform Genocide memories in the present) contribute to identity constitution through the retelling of collected stories and the experience of day-to-day life behind the walls of the Armenian Quarter. I then discuss how the community's Sts. Tarkmanchatz Armenian School and organized rallies around Genocide recognition, in particular, function as sites and spaces for identity-building through the performance of intergenerational memory and transnational citizenship. Finally, I examine how diaspora mobilization for Genocide recognition and support of Armenia in the Artsakh conflict - two major events which are linked in community memory - constitute localized ways of commemorating. While such localized practices of transnational memory have the potential to forge collective identities, given the complexities of the geopolitical landscape, they also prompt Jerusalemite Armenian youth to question their very sense of belonging as they navigate the space between homeland and diaspora.

## **Diaspora Nationalism and Identity Construction**

In contrast with traditional conceptions of nationalism tied to the nation-state, whose geopolitical borders are understood to define citizenship, diaspora or long-distance nationalism forges cohesion among dispersed populations, such as the Armenians.<sup>1</sup> Following Ander-

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<sup>1</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Long-Distance Nationalism: World Capitalism and the Rise of Identity Politics* (Amsterdam: Centre for Asian Studies, 1992).

son's understanding of the modern nation as an imagined community,<sup>2</sup> Werbner conceptualizes diasporas as "deterritorialized imagined communities which conceive of themselves, despite their dispersal, as sharing a collective past and common destiny, and hence also a simultaneity in time."<sup>3</sup> Considering Cohen's features common to diasporas,<sup>4</sup> this "collective past and common destiny" is rooted in (traumatic) dispersion, shared collective memory, the idealization of and commitment to the homeland, and a strong ethnonational collective consciousness extending across national boundaries. This diaspora consciousness<sup>5</sup> creates an imagined transnational community<sup>6</sup> connected by ties of moral co-responsibility,<sup>7</sup> reflected in the Armenian case by the notion of *Hay Dat*, "the Armenian cause." According to Khachig Tölölyan, the concept of *transnation* encompasses both the homeland and diaspora communities, while emphasizing such ties and interconnectedness.<sup>8</sup>

We must also recognize that diasporas are fluid and dynamic constructs,<sup>9</sup> allowing for the continuous (re)construction of ethnonational identity, which lies "at the very core of diaspora and its influence in home - and hostland."<sup>10</sup> Likewise, postmodern conceptions of identity demand that we reject the metanarrative of static, unified identities, and instead, understand identity as fluid, in-process, and even contradictory.<sup>11</sup> Diasporans are constantly negotiating their identities to cultivate social capital, those resources (e.g., knowledge, norms, supportive networks) linked to facilitating and sustaining group membership.<sup>12</sup> Given that the homeland "may serve as the physical embodiment of the shared national identity,"<sup>13</sup> homeland tragedy - both past and present - becomes a key channel through which sense

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2 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006).

3 Pnina Werbner, "The Place Which is Diaspora: Citizenship, Religion and Gender in the Making of Chaordic Transnationalism," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 28, no. 1 (2002):121, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830120103967>.

4 Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2008), 6-8.

5 Steven Vertovec, "Three Meanings of 'Diaspora,' Exemplified among South Asian Religions," *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 6, no. 3 (1997): 277-299, <https://doi.org/10.3138/diaspora.6.3.277>.

6 Victoria Redclift, "The Demobilization of Diaspora: History, Memory and 'Latent Identity,'" *Global Networks* 17, no. 4 (2017): 500-517, <https://doi.org/10.1111/glob.12150>.

7 Werbner, "The Place Which is Diaspora," 121.

8 Khachig Tölölyan, "Elites and Institutions in the Armenian Transnation," *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 9, no. 1 (2000): 107-136, <https://doi.org/10.1353/dsp.2000.0004>.

9 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994); Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (London: Routledge, 1996); Rogers Brubaker, "The 'Diaspora' Diaspora," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28, no. 1(2006):1-19, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0141987042000289997>.

10 Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff, *Digital Diasporas: Identity and Transnational Engagement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 31.

11 Anthony Elliott, *Concepts of the Self* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2014); Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); Stuart Hall, "Introduction: 'Who Needs 'Identity?'" in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (London: Sage, 1996), 1-17.

12 Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Richardson (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1986), 241-258; Janroj Yilmaz Keles, "Digital Diaspora and Social Capital," *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 9 (2016): 315-333, <https://doi.org/10.1163/18739865-00903004>; Robert D. Putnam, "The Prosperous Community: Social Capital and Public Life," *American Prospect* 13 (1993): 35-42.

13 Yossi Shain, "The Role of Diasporas in Conflict Perpetuation or Resolution," *SAIS Review* 22, no. 2 (2002): 138.

of belonging is established.<sup>14</sup> For the Armenian diaspora, national identity is “suspended” between homeland and hostland,<sup>15</sup> yet anchored in the memory of the historical Genocide and the ongoing conflict with Azerbaijan over Artsakh.

## **Practices of Remembering: Postmemory, Past Presenting, and Transnational Memory**

Research has consistently revealed how intergenerational memories of the Armenian Genocide are central to Armenian collective identity in the diaspora.<sup>16</sup> From a praxeological perspective, memory is understood as an ongoing, interactive social practice which can be performed, (re)produced, confirmed, discussed, and felt and linked to identity, spaces, places, and time. Practices of remembering are embedded within specific social contexts, subject to rules of how to remember that are associated with particular memory communities.<sup>17</sup> Following Chernobrov and Wilmers’ analysis of diaspora Armenian youth identities in France, the United Kingdom, and Russia,<sup>18</sup> and Gül Kaya’s research on Armenian youth identities in Canada,<sup>19</sup> the current research draws on the theoretical concepts of postmemory, past presenting, and transnational memory to understand the role of the Genocide and practices of remembering in shaping youth identities within the specific context of Jerusalem’s Armenian community.

Postmemory refers to how those in subsequent generations relate to the cultural trauma experienced by ancestors who came before.<sup>20</sup> Although those individuals comprising the second, third, and fourth generations did not directly experience the traumatic events of the past themselves, their effects persist into the present: “They ‘remember’ only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. But these experiences were

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14 Yossi Shain and Aharon Barth, “Diaspora and International Relations Theory,” *International Organization* 57 (2003): 449-479, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818303573015>.

15 Razmik Panossian, “Between Ambivalence and Intrusion: Politics and Identity in Armenia-Diaspora Relations,” *Diaspora* 7, no. 2 (1998): 149-196, <https://doi.org/10.3138/diaspora.7.2.149>.

16 See for example, Sossie Kasbarian, “The Politics of Memory and Commemoration: Armenian Diasporic Reflections on 2015,” *Nationalities Papers* 46, no. 1 (2018): 123-143, <https://doi.org/doi:10.1080/00905992.2017.1347917>; Razmik Panossian, “The Past as Nation: Three Dimensions of Armenian Identity,” *Geopolitics* 7, no. 2 (2002): 121-146, <https://doi.org/10.1080/7140009311>; Susan Pattie, “New Homeland for an Old Diaspora,” in *Homelands and Diasporas: Holy Lands and Other Places*, ed. André Levy and Alex Weingrod (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 49-67.

17 Danielle Drozdowski and Carolyn Birdsall, “Advancing Memory Methods,” in *Doing Memory Research*, ed. Danielle Drozdowski and Carolyn Birdsall (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 1-20; Gabrielle Rosenthal, “The Social Construction of Individual and Collective Memory,” in *Theorizing Social Memories: Concepts and Contexts*, ed. Gerd Sebald and Jatin Wagle (London: Routledge, 2016), 32-55.

18 Dmitry Chernobrov and Leila Wilmers, “Diaspora Identity and a New Generation: Armenian Diaspora Youth on the Genocide and the Karabakh War,” *Nationalities Papers* 48, no. 5 (2020): 915-930. <https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2019.74>.

19 Duygu Gül Kaya, “Memory and Citizenship in Diaspora: Remembering the Armenian Genocide in Canada,” *Citizenship Studies* 22, no. 4 (2018): 401-418, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2018.1462503>; Duygu Gül Kaya, “100 Voices After 100 Years: Remembering the Armenian Genocide in Diaspora,” *Popular Communication* 16, no. 2 (2018): 128-140, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15405702.2017.1378889>.

20 Marianne Hirsch, “The Generation of Postmemory,” *Poetics Today* 29, no. 1 (2008): 103-128, <https://doi.org/10.1215/03335372-2007-019>.

transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to *seem* to constitute memories in their own right.”<sup>21</sup> Postmemory narratives of the Genocide transmitted between generations have become a fundamental component of diasporic Armenian identity. For example, Azarian-Ceccato’s study of the great-grandchildren of Armenian Genocide survivors in Central California<sup>22</sup> demonstrates how communities of memory linking the past and present are formed through the narrativization of collected stories, in which the experiences of another are incorporated into one’s own life history.<sup>23</sup> Likewise, research on long-distance nationalism among Armenian youth in Southern Russia finds that “the retelling of genocide experiences is an overarching, cultural narrative that defines family and ethnic group beliefs and identity.”<sup>24</sup> Meanwhile, Gül Kaya describes how Canadian-Armenian youth used an audiovisual postmemory project to reconstruct their connections with the past and engage in activism for historical justice in the present<sup>25</sup>.

Such a reshaping of the past within contemporary contexts summons Macdonald’s concept of “past presencing,” which considers how “people variously draw on, experience, negotiate, reconstruct, and perform the past in their ongoing lives.”<sup>26</sup> From Armenian diaspora communities in Brazil<sup>27</sup> to those in Iran,<sup>28</sup> performance of the memory of the Genocide at commemorative events plays a cohesive role in developing and maintaining collective identity given the familiarity of the trauma and its relevance to collective imagination. Considering commemorations as “performances of the past which are central to the politics of the present,”<sup>29</sup> such practices of past presencing function to cement scattered, diverse Armenian diaspora communities into a collective imagined Armenian transnation. Yet, localized ways of commemorating mean that past presencing is performed in distinctive ways because of varying socio-historical and geopolitical contexts.<sup>30</sup> This localization of past presencing practices recalls Rothberg’s located approach to transnational memory, which pays “rigorous attention to the local . . . but it situates such attention in relation to other scales: from

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21 Ibid., 107.

22 Natasha Azarian-Ceccato, “Reverberations of the Armenian Genocide: Narrative’s Intergenerational Transmission and the Task of Not Forgetting,” *Narrative Inquiry* 20 no. 1 (2010): 106-123. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.20.1.06aza>.

23 Brian Schiff, Chaim Noy, and Bertram J. Cohler, “Collected Stories in the Life Narratives of Holocaust Survivors,” *Narrative Inquiry* 11, no. 1 (2001): 159-194.

24 Ulrike Ziemer, “Belonging and Longing: Armenian Youth and Diasporic Long-Distance Nationalism in Contemporary Russia,” *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 10, no. 2 (2010): 294. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1754-9469.2010.01079.x>.

25 Gül Kaya, “100 Voices,” 130.

26 Sharon Macdonald, “Presencing Europe’s Pasts,” in *A Companion to the Anthropology of Europe*, ed. Ullrich Kockel, Máiréad Nic Craith, and Jonas Frykman (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 234.

27 Pedro Bogossian-Porto, “Accounts of a Genocide: Collective Memory among Armenians in Brazil,” *Haigazian Armenological Review* 38 (2018): 449-466.

28 James Barry, *Armenian Christians in Iran: Ethnicity, Religion, and Identity in the Islamic Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018): 206-244.

29 Camilla Orjuela, “Mobilising Diasporas for Justice: Opportunity Structures and the Presencing of a Violent Past,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44, no. 8 (2018): 1366, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1354163>.

30 Sabrina Papazian, “The Cost of Memorializing: Analyzing Armenian Genocide Memorials and Commemorations in the Republic of Armenia and in the Diaspora,” *International Journal for History, Culture and Modernity* 7 (2019): 55-86, <https://doi.org/10.18352/hcm.534>.

the regional to the national to the global.”<sup>31</sup> The concept of transnational memory, rooted in a processual and generative approach to cultural memory, reflects the deterritorialization of memory-making, aided by transnational flows of peoples and new media technologies.<sup>32</sup> According to Gül Kaya, public commemorations in Canada, in which the transnationalized memories of the Armenian Genocide are performed and reproduced, are central to the construction of Armenian ethnic identity and inform local practices of citizenship.<sup>33</sup> In this manner, performances of memory can function as acts of citizenship<sup>34</sup> in tandem with diaspora mobilization and engagement.<sup>35</sup>

## **Diaspora Mobilization and the Armenian Case**

As an expression of diaspora nationalism, diaspora mobilization is a political activity that crosses one or more borders and aims to influence the political situation in the homeland or influence public opinion in the country of residence on political events abroad.<sup>36</sup> Common examples of diaspora mobilization include economic remittances, philanthropy, volunteering in the homeland, political lobbying, engagement on digital platforms, and organizing protests and demonstrations in support of the homeland. However, Mavroudi cautions that we cannot assume that long-distance nationalism and an emotional attachment to the homeland will necessarily galvanize diaspora populations.<sup>37</sup> Rather, diasporas are embedded in local, national, supranational, and global contexts which shape, and are shaped, by their activism.<sup>38</sup> Past presencing, ways in which the past is experienced, performed and represented in the present, is at the heart of diaspora identity and mobilization.<sup>39</sup> Diasporans may mobilize to express their identities, motivated by a sense of obligation or guilt and/or in response to feelings of marginalization in the country of residence.<sup>40</sup> Identity-focused conflicts, such as the conflict over Artsakh, engage diasporas as mobilized transnational actors<sup>41</sup> or “third

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31 Michael Rothberg, “Locating Transnational Memory,” *European Review* 22, no. 4 (2014): 652, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1062798714000441>.

32 Chiara De Cesari and Ann Rigney, “Introduction,” in *Transnational Memory: Circulation, Articulation, Scales*, ed. Chiara De Cesari and Ann Rigney (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 12.

33 Gül Kaya, “Memory and Citizenship,” 414.

34 Engin F. Isin, “Theorizing Acts of Citizenship,” in *Acts of Citizenship*, ed. Engin F. Isin and Greg M. Nielsen (London: Zed Books, 2008), 17.

35 Michael Rothberg and Yasemin Yildiz, “Memory Citizenship: Migrant Archives of Holocaust Remembrance in Contemporary Germany,” *Parallax* 17 no. 4 (2011): 32-48, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13534645.2011.605576>.

36 Lea Müller-Funk, “Diaspora Mobilizations in the Egyptian (Post)Revolutionary Process: Comparing Transnational Political Participation in Paris and Vienna,” *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 14, no. 3 (2016): 353-370, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2016.1180471>.

37 Elizabeth Mavroudi, “Deconstructing Diasporic Mobilisation at a Time of Crisis: Perspectives from the Palestinian and Greek Diasporas,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44, no. 8 (2018): 1309-1324, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1354159>.

38 Maria Koinova, “Diaspora Mobilisation for Conflict and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Contextual and Comparative Dimensions,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44, no. 8 (2018): 1251-1269, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1354152>.

39 Orjuela, “Mobilising Diasporas for Justice,” 1359.

40 Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff, “Diasporas and Conflict Societies: Conflict Entrepreneurs, Competing Interests or Contributors to Stability and Development?” *Conflict, Security & Development* 11, no. 2 (2011): 115-143, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2011.572453>.

41 Armine Ishkanian, “Diaspora and Global Civil Society: The Impact of Transnational Diaspora Activism

level” players in transnational communal politics.<sup>42</sup> Consequently, we can understand diaspora mobilizations as acts of citizenship<sup>43</sup> in which performances and acts produce and define citizenships, which may lie outside legal and political categories of citizenship.

The confrontation and memorialization of past and present atrocities in the homeland involving human rights violations are key impetuses behind diaspora mobilization and engagement.<sup>44</sup> In the Armenian case, the Genocide and Artsakh conflict have historically served as focal points for patriotic mobilization in the diaspora, where commemorative events and protests take place across the globe, in locations far removed from where the atrocities actually happened. Genocide recognition is the primary political cause around which diaspora organizations unite, with cooperation taking place between different political parties and across generations because of the shared cultural trauma.<sup>45</sup> As such, diaspora nationalism and mobilization around Genocide recognition provide a reference point for identification, especially for marginalized Armenian communities in the Middle East.<sup>46</sup> Given that the Artsakh conflict and the Genocide share the same symbolic enemy (regarding the close cultural, linguistic, and military ties between Turkey and Azerbaijan), this unresolved dispute has functioned as a secondary rallying point around which Armenian diasporas mobilize.<sup>47</sup> After the escalation of the conflict during the Four Day War of April 2016, Chernobrov and Wilmers noted that postmemories and practices of past presencing became increasingly important for Armenian youth identity negotiation in the diaspora as the Genocide and present conflict were linked.<sup>48</sup> In light of the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War, the ensuing ceasefire, and the significant territorial losses endured by the Republic of Artsakh, the current research explores how intergenerational memories of the Genocide shape the performance of diasporic Armenian youth identities in Jerusalem considering these new realities.

## **Case Study: The Armenian Community of Jerusalem and its Youth**

Occupying approximately one-sixth of the Old City, the Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem constitutes one of the oldest Armenian diaspora communities. Centered around the Monas-

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on Armenia’s Post-Soviet Transition” in *Central Asia and the Caucasus: Transnationalism and Diaspora*, ed. Touraj Atabaki and Sanjyot Mehendale (London: Routledge, 2004), 113-139.

42 Shain, “The Role of Diasporas,” 117.

43 Isin, “Theorizing Acts of Citizenship,” 17.

44 Maria Koinova, “Diasporas and Secessionist Conflicts: The Mobilization of the Armenian, Albanian and Chechen Diasporas,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34, no. 2 (2011): 333-356, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2010.489646>; Maria Koinova and Dzeneta Karabegovic, “Diasporas and Transitional Justice: Transnational Activism from Local to Global Levels of Engagement,” *Global Networks* 17, no. 2 (2017): 212-233.

45 Sossie Kasbarian, “The ‘Others’ Within: The Armenian Community in Cyprus,” in *Diasporas of the Modern Middle East: Contextualizing Community*, ed. Anthony Gorman and Sossie Kasbarian (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 241-273; Maria Koinova, “Conflict and Cooperation in Armenian Diaspora Mobilisation for Genocide Recognition,” in *Diaspora as Cultures of Cooperation*, ed. David Carment and Ariane Sadjed (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 111-129.

46 Kasbarian, “The ‘Others’ Within,” 256.

47 Chernobrov and Wilmers, “Diaspora Identity and a New Generation,” 926; Khachig Tölölyan, “The Armenian Diaspora and the Karabagh Conflict Since 1988,” in *Diasporas in Conflict: Peace Makers or Peace Wreckers*, ed. Hazel Smith and Paul Stares (New York: United Nations University Press, 2007), 106-28.

48 Chernobrov and Wilmers, “Diaspora Identity and a New Generation,” 926.



tery of St. James, the headquarters of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the community's origins can be traced to at least the fifth century. Following a massive influx of refugees who had survived the Genocide, the monastery was transformed into a neighborhood in the 1920s.<sup>49</sup> Serving as a major cultural center, today the monastery compound houses three churches, clerical residences, administrative offices, lay residences, social clubs, a library, health clinic, football field, and the Sts. Tarkmanchatz School. A theological seminary, located across the road from the monastery, trains young men for the priesthood.

Most of the community's youth attend the Sts. Tarkmanchatz School, founded in 1929 to educate the children of the growing lay community. Operating under the auspices of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the Sts. Tarkmanchatz School functions as an ethnic community mother-tongue school,<sup>50</sup> with goals of Armenian language maintenance and the development of Armenian identity. In addition to instruction in a variety of Armenological subjects (Armenian history, language, culture, and religion), the school uses the British-based International General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) curriculum (in lieu of Israeli *bagrut* or Palestinian *tawjihi* matriculation). Given use of the British curriculum, English is the primary language of instruction in all courses, except for the Armenological subjects (taught in Armenian) and Arabic and Hebrew language classes. Students speak Armenian (Western dialect) and/or Arabic as their mother tongue(s) and receive mandatory instruction in the Armenian, Arabic, Hebrew, and English languages.<sup>51</sup> Alongside formal education at the Sts. Tarkmanchatz School, many youngsters are active participants in scouting programs run by the two main social clubs (Homenetmen and Hoyetchmen), which have traditionally played central roles in the socialization of Armenian diaspora youth.<sup>52</sup>

Despite the efforts of community institutions, such as the social clubs and the Sts. Tarkmanchatz School, to preserve Jerusalem's Armenian enclave, its population has experienced a marked decline since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. This trend is not unique to the Armenian community, but is also characteristic of Jerusalem's other Christian

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49 On the history of Armenians in Jerusalem see Victor Azarya, *The Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem: Urban Life behind Monastery Walls* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Bedross Der Matossian, "The Armenians of Jerusalem in the Modern Period: The Rise and Decline of a Community," in *Routledge Handbook on Jerusalem*, ed. Sulaiman Mourad, Bedross Der Matossian, and Naomi Koltun-Fromm (London: Routledge, 2018), 396-407; George Hintlian, *History of the Armenians in the Holy Land* (Jerusalem: St. James Press, 1976); Raymond Kevorkian, "From a Monastery to a Neighbourhood: Orphans and Armenian Refugees in the Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem (1916-1926). Reflexions Towards an Armenian Museum in Jerusalem," *Contemporary Levant* 6, no. 2 (2021): 141-157, <https://doi.org/10.1080/20581831.2021.1898124>; Daphne Tsimhoni, "The Armenians and the Syrians: Ethno-religious Communities in Jerusalem," *Middle Eastern Studies* 20, no. 3 (1984): 352-369.

50 Joshua A. Fishman, "Ethnic Community Mother Tongue Schools in the U.S.A.: Dynamics and Distributions," *International Migration Review* 14, no. 2 (1980): 235-247, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2545475>.

51 On the multiple discourses present in the Armenian School's curriculum see Lance Levenson and Julia Resnik, "Between Ethnonational and International Curricula: Competing Identity Discourses in the Armenian School in Jerusalem," *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 42, no. 2 (2021): 213-228, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2021.1877528>.

52 Pedro Bogossian-Porto and Thiago Bogossian, "The School is Not Enough: The Role of Non-Formal Educational Spaces in Preserving Armenian Identity in the Diasporic Community," *International Studies in Sociology of Education* (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1080/09620214.2021.1912632>; Nicola Migliorino, *(Re)constructing Armenia in Lebanon and Syria: Ethno-Cultural Diversity and the State in the Aftermath of a Refugee Crisis* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008), 200.

communities, whose waning population can be attributed, in large part, to their uncertain position in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.<sup>53</sup> Writing about the Armenian community in particular, Harry Hagopian explains it cannot separate itself from the conflict, “since the deleterious social and economic consequences (such as emigration) of this conflict have been visited upon them as a direct result of the political situation and the Israeli occupation.”<sup>54</sup> Given the precarious situation of Christian communities vis-à-vis the ongoing struggle over Jerusalem, as well as contentious citizenship statuses, limited access to higher education, and a lack of affordable housing, many Armenians have emigrated over the years to diaspora centers in Europe and North America in pursuit of higher education and career opportunities.

For those Jerusalemite Armenians who have remained despite these challenges, Israel’s non-recognition of the Genocide and collaboration in recent Azerbaijani belligerence in Artsakh complicates matters even further - especially for youth in the midst of negotiating identities. Like elsewhere in the diaspora, most of today’s Jerusalemite Armenian youth are descendants of Genocide survivors. For the Jerusalem Armenian community, Turkish denial of the Genocide is compounded by Israel’s refusal to recognize the Armenian Genocide,<sup>55</sup> despite the Jewish State having been established in the aftermath of the Holocaust. Furthermore, during the Second Artsakh War in the Fall of 2020, Israel provided military support for Azerbaijani aggression, including the sale of kamikaze drones used in attacks on Armenian soldiers and civilians.<sup>56</sup> Finally, many Jerusalem Armenians perceive a real “Turkish threat” in Jerusalem. Turkish President Erdogan has claimed that “Jerusalem is our city,” while media outlets have reported on Turkish schemes to purchase Armenian and Christian properties in the Old City.<sup>57</sup>

Amid the Jerusalem Armenian community’s marginalization, the protracted Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and Israel’s non-recognition of past and present Armenian suffering, this article explores how the complexities of the geopolitical landscape interact with intergenerational memories of the Genocide. How do intergenerational memories of the Genocide (transmitted within family, school, and community settings) shape the performance of diaspora Armenian youth identities in Jerusalem? How are collected stories around the Genocide and the Artsakh conflict linked within communities of memory? How do mobilizations

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53 Daphne Tsimhoni, “Christians in Jerusalem: A Minority at Risk,” *Journal of Human Rights* 4, no. 3 (2005): 391-417, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14754830500257695>.

54 Harry Hagopian, *The Armenian Church in the Holy Land* (Nottingham: Russell Press, 2016), 30.

55 Yair Auron, *The Banality of Denial* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2003); Israel W. Charney, *Israel’s Failed Response to the Armenian Genocide: Denial, State Deception, Truth Versus Politicization of History* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2021).

56 Seth J. Frantzman, “Israeli Drones in Azerbaijan Raise Questions on Use in the Battlefield,” *The Jerusalem Post*, 1 October 2020, at <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/israeli-drones-in-azerbaijan-raise-questions-on-use-in-the-battlefield-644161>; Yossi Melman, “As Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict Expands, Israel-Azerbaijan Arms Trade Thrives,” *Haaretz*, 7 October 2020, at <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/nagorno-karabakh-conflict-israel-azerbaijan-arms-trade-armenia-iran-1.9212986>, accessed 07.08.2021.

57 Tobias Siegal, “Erdogan: Jerusalem is Our City, a City from Us” *The Jerusalem Post*, 3 October 2020, at <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/erdoan-jerusalem-is-our-city-a-city-from-us-644306>; Baruch Yedid, “Turkey Working to Take Over Armenian Quarter in Jerusalem’s Old City,” *The Jewish Press*, 13 February 2020, <https://www.jewishpress.com/news/middle-east/turkey/exclusive-turkey-working-to-take-over-armenian-quarter-in-jerusalem-old-city/2020/02/13/>, accessed 08.08.2021.

around collective memories intersect with local geopolitics to construct identity narratives among Jerusalem's Armenian youth, as members of a disempowered minority?

## **Methodology**

This research draws on extensive participant observation from over six years (2015-2021) of fieldwork in the Armenian Jerusalem community and in the Sts. Tarkmanchatz Armenian School, where I have served as a teacher in the secondary grades since 2013. In addition to my daily presence at the school within the framework of my teaching responsibilities, during this time period I took part in countless assemblies, marches, protests, memorials, and prayer services organized by the school, the Armenian Patriarchate, the social clubs, and various advocacy organizations. Public commemorations and ritual performances, abundant with cultural codes and symbols,<sup>58</sup> play a pivotal role in shaping collective identities as values, memories, and meanings are passed between generations.<sup>59</sup> When feasible, on-site fieldnotes were taken during the events, with full observation protocols typed as soon as possible following their completion. In several cases, audio and video recordings of events were used to supplement the fieldnotes. In conjunction with participant observation, I conducted ten intensive interviews with Jerusalem Armenian youth and youth leaders in the community social clubs to understand identity construction from a phenomenological perspective. All interviewees are graduates of the community's Sts. Tarkmanchatz School, including three alumni who are current or former teachers at the school.

Occupying a dual role as a teacher-ethnographer, I often engaged in commemorative events, by necessity, as a "complete participant."<sup>60</sup> While permission to conduct research in the school was granted by the school administration, my presence at school and community events was not unexpected, given my position as a member of the social setting. Marching in the streets with youth, carrying banners, chanting slogans, delivering speeches, and lighting candles, I functioned as an "insider-outsider" occupying a "space between."<sup>61</sup> Despite years of "insider" experience within the community, I always possess some degree of "outsiderness" as a non-Armenian within the Armenian Quarter, where I must navigate a space, culture, and language not my own. The embodied ethnographic approach employed in this study permits an analysis of multiple memory dimensions, including the social, spatial, and material. As diaspora youth engage in practices of postmemory and past presencing within a transnational field, I seek to identify those interactive processes through which past traumas are bestowed with collective meaning(s) in the here and now.

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58 Don Handelman, *Models and Mirrors: Towards an Anthropology of Public Events* (New York: Berghahn Books, 1998), 1-20.

59 Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 41-71.

60 Raymond L. Gold, "Roles in Sociological Field Observations," *Social Forces* 36, no. 3 (1958): 217-223, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2573808>.

61 Sony Corbin Dwyer and Jennifer L. Buckle, "The Space between: On Being an Insider-Outsider in Qualitative Research," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 8, no. 1 (2009): 54-63, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406918788176>.

## Intergenerational Trauma, Collected Stories, and Youth Ethnonational Identity Construction

For the typical passerby, the Armenian Quarter, located in the southwest corner of Jerusalem's Old City, is easy to miss. While it is the smallest of Jerusalem's four quarters, it is not its diminutive size that simply prevents its discovery. Rather, most of the Armenian Quarter lies obscured from view, its residents and institutions isolated from the general public behind nearly impenetrable stone walls. Wandering tourists are repeatedly turned away at the entrance; only members of this diaspora Armenian community, or those who are connected to it, are allowed to continue onward. A simple Armenian greeting to the vigilant guards serves as an informal password which enables your safe passage into the confines of the Armenian Convent (known simply as the *vank*) behind heavy iron gates which lock nightly at midnight. Not only does the Armenian Quarter's physical isolation from the outside world maintain a monastic environment, but it also functions to preserve, on a daily basis, the experience of siege and threat that has characterized the history of the Armenian nation.

Sako<sup>62</sup> referenced the closed nature of the Jerusalem Armenian community: "*We're survivors of a genocide, you know. We really need, it's embedded in us to stay together, stay somewhere safe.*" Taleen also described the Genocide as a unifying, yet isolating force on identity construction:

I think it [i.e., the Genocide] made us more patriotic than most other nationalities would be. I think the fact that there is a large part of our history, especially because it's unrecognized, it makes us very, sort of fight for the justice that we deserve, and do all that. I think it really did bring us closer together. Because if it wasn't for the Genocide, most of us wouldn't even be in Jerusalem. . . . And as people, it did bring us closer together, it did make us stay attached to our roots, and not just get lost amongst Israelis or Palestinians.

Taleen links the community's existence to the Genocide, while highlighting the Armenian patriotism it has fostered, and which has kept them from assimilating within local cultures and identifying with either party to the regional conflict. Unlike the dual loyalties documented in Armenian communities elsewhere,<sup>63</sup> Taleen and the other interviewees described their national identity solely as "Armenian."

The Genocide, and the protective walls of the *vank*, were also fundamental forces in shaping Kohar's identity:

So I grew up in Jerusalem, but I always knew that I'm Armenian and I'm nothing else but Armenian. . . . I grew up identifying as Jerusalemite, but I've never identified myself as either Israeli or Palestinian. And I think it's the community here, and the

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62 All participant names used are pseudonyms to protect anonymity.

63 See for example, Anny Bakalian, *Armenian-Americans: From Being to Feeling Armenian* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1993); Vered Amit Talai, *Armenians in London: Management of Social Boundaries* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989); Gül Kaya, "Memory and Citizenship," 406.

convent itself, and the literal walls of the convent, that kind of allow that identity to form. . . . As diaspora Armenians, we grow up kind of with that identity like molded, because you know it's a reality that you have to live with. Because of the Genocide we're here. But you know, we have to make do with what we have. But there's always this idea of an Armenia that maybe we can hopefully go back to. If not my parents, then me. If not me, then my children.

Like Taleen, Kohar associates the suboptimal diasporic condition and her Armenian Jerusalemite identity - which lies outside the bounds of traditional political or legal citizenship - with the Genocide. Kohar's reference to the "idea of an Armenia to go back to" is striking. Despite the existence of the modern Republic of Armenia, it is the ideal of an "imagined" Armenian homeland to which she aspires to return.

Interviewed youth frequently referred to the overwhelming nature of the Genocide and the intergenerational transfer of trauma. Lilit explained how the Genocide seems to touch every facet of her life:

So this is something every Armenian has to grow up with. The Genocide. It has to be mentioned at least thirty times a month. Everything is connected to the Genocide. . . . And in school, you learn about this from a very young age. You have lectures about it, many books about it. It's always there. It's part of our identity. That's how we look at it. It's not just some topic in a textbook.

For Lilit, postmemories - formed through family stories, books, and lessons in school - are a fundamental part of her identity. Positioning himself as a victim of the Genocide, Sako describes an inherited trauma rooted in postmemories of events experienced by his great-grandparents. *"Growing up and learning about all this, knowing that you had some homes over there, and everything taken away, all the factories or the shops that you had. Just like, it's all gone, it's not for you anymore. Learning that as a kid I think was pretty traumatizing, in a sense that you can't really trust a lot of people."*

Sako's narrative, in which he makes claims to homes, factories, and shops in Eastern Anatolia as if he personally experienced the losses, illustrates the power of postmemory rooted in cultural trauma to connect generations. Meanwhile, past presencing can be observed in Sako's remark concerning how this intergenerational trauma conferred an inability to trust others today. Vahan's narrative similarly features collected stories, using the first person plural pronoun "we," which inserts himself into the Genocide memory:

We were merchants. So we had that going on, and then the Genocide happened and we ran away. We had to. We lost all the assets. So, my great-grandmother, pregnant with my grandfather, of course, ran all the way through Syria and there was this Turkish soldier. It turns out he held her at gunpoint while she was pregnant. . . . He let her go. Turns out, obviously, had he pulled the trigger, I wouldn't be sitting here today, Teacher Lance. So the thought of that, that event, that single decision of pulling

or not pulling the trigger more than a century ago, led to my existence here, is mind boggling.

Vahan's existential musings, tied-up with internalized collected stories and intergenerational memories, provide yet another example of how the practice of past presencing links the past with the present.

Practices of past presencing and an internalization of the Genocide are also observed in Kohar's narrative, in which she asserts she feels as if she was born with genetic memories of the collective trauma, and explains how this influences her everyday performance of identity in Jerusalem:

I don't remember the day my parents told me about the Genocide. . . . It was something, as if I was born knowing this, you know. And I think part of that is because it's always talked about, whether it's talked about, you know, in the home, like my grandma telling stories of her grandparents that died there, or her parents that fled from Armenia, or Western Armenia. Or whether it was from school or the protests that we're taken to, you know, you're a one-year-old, you go to the protest . . . . So, I think it's a huge, huge part of my identity, the Genocide itself. . . . I owe it to my ancestors that survived, and those that didn't survive, to preserve that identity and culture that, whether it's through going to dance practice or going, or singing Armenian, or when I'm walking by the school and the kids are speaking in English, telling them to speak in Armenian. . . . I do that as a result of the Genocide.

Kohar describes her identity as rooted not only in the past events themselves, but in how she continuously reconstructs the meaning of the Genocide in her day-to-day life through those activities which strengthen both individual and collective Armenian ethnonational identity. The Sts. Tarkmanchatz School and community protests are highlighted by Kohar as significant mediators of this identity entrenched in Genocide memories. I will now examine how intergenerational memory is transmitted within these contexts.

### **Youth Performance of Genocide Memories and Transnational Citizenship in the School and at Community Protests**

From giant maps documenting forced deportations perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire to black-and-white portraits depicting well-known Armenian Genocide victims, the physical walls of the Sts. Tarkmanchatz School bear witness to the memory of past atrocities. Lining the hallways are annual school pictures, in which the entire student body and school staff pose on the steps of the old orphanage to re-enact a photograph of child survivors from the 1920s, which is currently featured in the exhibition at the Armenian Genocide Museum in Yerevan. Taking the annual school photograph in this exact location is a past presencing practice which reinforces the intergenerational memory of the Genocide.

Students are actively involved in past presencing in the curriculum, as students are en-

couraged to express intergenerational memories through the visual and performing arts. A bulletin board display created by Grade 6 students to commemorate the 106<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Genocide in April 2021 linked the Genocide with both identity and the Armenian homeland. Drawings of trees and references to roots (e.g., “Cut my branches, burn my leaves, but you’ll NEVER touch my roots!” and “24 April 1915. Armenian Genocide. From the roots we came.”) emphasized the rootedness of youth identities in the events of 1915. Meanwhile, the Armenian tricolor, maps of Armenia, images of the Armenian Genocide Memorial, pomegranates, mother Armenia, and Armenian landscapes served as expressions of transnational identities rooted in memories of the Genocide. The annual school ceremony commemorating the Armenian Genocide in late April provides opportunities for student to perform the past, for example, through the performance of survivor testimonies. With the melancholy music of the *duduk*<sup>64</sup> sounding softly in the background, a ninth-grade student read a survivor testimony as she actively took on the role of the victim: “*The crowds were huge in Meskeneh. We were in the middle of a vast sandy area and the Armenians there were from all over, not only from Marash. We had no water and soldiers would not give us any. . . . We used to eat grass. We used to pick grains from animal waste, wash them and then in tin cans fry them to eat.*”

When the student takes the stage before the school community, she transforms into the survivor, obscuring temporal boundaries as past suffering, performed in the present moment, becomes that of all Armenians.

Each year on 24 April, the Jerusalem community organizes protests and marches in acts of diaspora mobilization in which commemorative practices function as transnational acts of citizenship. Takvor described the importance of this day as a unifying, identity-building event for the community: “*Remembering the dead is important, it’s . . . one of the days that brings the community together. . . . I’m not a victim anymore. We’re not victims today of that Genocide. We’re victims, we are victims of the Genocide, but we have demands.*”

While at first glance, Takvor’s remarks may seem contradictory. Initially, he declares that he’s not a victim anymore, but then immediately reverses course and states that “*we are victims of the Genocide, but we have demands.*” However, Takvor’s statement can be interpreted to reflect a lingering sense of collective victimization that extends beyond a personal sense of trauma. Through these protests, inherited narratives of victimization find new expressions via transnational acts of citizenship in which claims and demands are shouted in the streets of Jerusalem.

On 24 April 2019, Armenian youth took part in one such ritualized protest facing the Turkish consulate, following the annual custom in Jerusalem on Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day. Gathered behind the police tape cordoning off the permitted demonstration area, the youth, bearing the flags of Armenia and Artsakh, were clad in red T-shirts bearing the three words: “RECOGNITION. CONDEMNATION. REPARATION.” With bodies transformed into political posters, youth publicly re-enacted the role of bleeding victims in

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<sup>64</sup> The *duduk*, or Armenian oboe, is a symbol not only of the historical trauma of the Genocide but also a symbol of Armenian national identity. See Andy Nercessian, *The Duduk and National Identity in Armenia* (Laham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2001).

front of the oppressor. One of the youth leaders shouted into the megaphone, demanding an end to the ongoing Turkish and Israeli denial:

We call upon the international community and countries like the USA,<sup>65</sup> the United Kingdom, and Israel to stop using the Armenian Genocide as a political card, and fulfill their moral and historical obligation by recognizing the Armenian Genocide. Turkey, you cannot run away from your own shadow. In the name of the Armenian people, and especially its youth, I pledge an oath that we will never rest until the Armenian Genocide is recognized.

Standing under the scorching sun, staring down the red star and crescent flag flapping in the wind across the street, I joined those assembled in the scathing chant: “Shame on Turkey! Turkey run, Turkey hide, Turkey’s guilty of genocide!”

Lilit described her experience as a participant in these protests, in which Genocide memories are performed and transnational citizenships enacted:

Posters. Armenian flags everywhere. Your hair, pins, everything is the flag. You just feel patriotic and you have that moment where you say, “I’m happy I’m Armenian.” You just feel that moment of pride, when you’re with your people and you have purpose there. And you’re going after something. . . . Of course we want Israel to recognize, because as citizens, we’re doing our part. . . . I think we deserve that from our country. I’m saying our, because we’re technically citizens. We have the passport, we were born here.<sup>66</sup> Something so important to us. Some people still today are struggling. You know, post-traumatic syndrome. PTSD. . . . Their parents saw the war, and they saw their parents die in front of them.

Lilit’s narrative seamlessly flows from visual displays of Armenian pride and support of the homeland, which constitute transnational acts of citizenship, to local acts of citizenship in which she demands recognition from the country in which she resides and holds a passport. She then returns to the lingering trauma of Genocide postmemory, which is exacerbated by the lack of Israeli recognition.

Sevan also decried Israel’s moral failure, which he attributed to political motives: “*Especially them [i.e., Jewish Israelis], they have been through a genocide, so they know the grief and the pain. . . . They have been through a Holocaust. They should recognize it. . . . It’s inhumane not to [recognize the Genocide] because of politics. But again, politics is another world. It’s a world of lies, let’s say.*”

Politics is also at the heart of Israel’s involvement in the recent Artsakh conflict. Jerusalemite Armenians, such as Sevan, must contend not only with Israel’s non-recognition of the Genocide - and by extension their collective identity - but also with Israeli military

<sup>65</sup> On 24 April 2021, United States President Joe Biden formally recognized the Armenian Genocide.

<sup>66</sup> While Lilit and her family are Israeli citizens, a sizable number of Jerusalemite Armenians do not, in fact, have Israeli citizenship, but rather have the status of “East Jerusalem resident,” which does not entitle them to an Israeli passport.



support for Azerbaijan. I now turn to the role of intergenerational memory and diaspora mobilization in shaping youth identities during the conflict's most recent escalation in the autumn of 2020.

## **From the Genocide to the Second Artsakh War: Diaspora Mobilization, Transnational Memory, and Questions of Identity**

Like elsewhere in the diaspora, in the Jerusalem community, the Artsakh conflict is often linked with the Genocide. In the words of Takvor: *“The Genocide, this topic is very much alive in the community. Add to that the present conflict with Azerbaijan, which adds also like an alarm to the Genocide. We connect the two stories together. . . . Israel today is not recognizing the Genocide because of Azerbaijan. ”*

Referencing the economic and military partnership between Israel and Azerbaijan, Takvor not only couples the Genocide with the current hostilities but also associates Israel's non-recognition of Turkish responsibility with the strengthening of Israeli-Azerbaijani cooperation. Given this linkage, and considering the prominent role played by Genocide postmemory in mobilizing diaspora Armenians and shaping contemporary youth identities in Jerusalem, it follows that the Artsakh conflict functions in a similar capacity. Emulating the annual 24 April Genocide protests, Jerusalemite Armenians took to the streets in acts of diaspora mobilization in October and November 2020. Decked out in red, blue, and orange, youth pounded the pavement, marching in the streets of downtown Jerusalem as they belted out lyrics to patriotic and revolutionary songs rooted in intergenerational memories. “Today we'll take Artsakh, tomorrow Van!” proclaims the penultimate line of the song *Yelek Hay-er Baykari*, connecting the present-day war with the lost historical homelands of Western Armenia. Protestors carried an array of glossy posters, including one featuring a black-and-white Hitler-Erdogan composite, complete with the Turkish flag and Nazi swastika pinned to either of the hybrid supervillain's suit jacket lapels. Hebrew text printed on the sign read: “Erdogan is the Turkish Hitler. To arm Azerbaijan is to arm Hitler.” This poster links the Genocide, the Artsakh conflict, and the Jewish Holocaust together in an appeal to the Israeli government to halt arms sales to the Armenian adversary.

Invoking the popular mantra of “Never Again,” often used in public discourse on the Holocaust, Kayane also linked these events together, even labeling the Armenian losses in Artsakh a second genocide:

Whoever attacks us, we need to stay strong, be one hand. . . . If everyone gives their own opinion, nothing is going to work and we're going to lose another country. Which we did. That, in my case, is another genocide that happened. Another hundred years passed, and we didn't learn from the mistake that happened a hundred years ago. We go outside for protests, “Never again, never again, never again.” And what? It happened a couple months ago. And we lost a lot of boys, young boys, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen. It's sad we lost a generation. It's hard to talk about this topic because we're not progressing.

Echoing Vahan's use of the first person plural "we" in the narration of collected stories as a practice of past presencing described previously, here Kayane's repetition of the word "we" refers to a unified Armenian transnation shaped by transnational memories of loss situated within a cyclical perspective of historical time. Lamenting a lack of progress and the seeming ineffectiveness of diaspora mobilization efforts, Kayane experienced the recent Armenian defeat through the lens of Genocide postmemory.

As a frequent participant in community demonstrations against Israeli weapon sales to Azerbaijan, Levon also described the sense of loss and disillusionment he experienced during the Second Artsakh War: *"It was kind of like a dream. . . . After the war, we really felt what it was like being in a war. . . . Even if the event didn't directly affect me. Because it's my nation, and we suffered for being Armenian. The protests that I went to every day, shouting that never really got anywhere, you know?"*

Similar to Genocide postmemories, transnationalized memories of the recent war - facilitated largely by social media - can transcend space and time to mold identities rooted in the collective suffering of the Armenian transnation. Notably, Levon's grief is not only vicarious, but bound up with personal feelings of defeat given that his shouting appeared to fall on deaf ears. Referring to protests around both the Genocide and Artsakh issues, Kohar also questioned whether such acts of diaspora mobilization really get anywhere: *"But in terms of the activism, whether it's social media or actually going to these protests, I think those are a little bit useless. . . . I think those protests are more for us than to actually make any change."*

Both Levon and Kohar express the inability of these mobilization efforts to effect change, considering the politics of non-recognition in Israel and the relative powerlessness of the small Armenian Christian minority. Likewise, Sako also describes acts of mobilization as diasporan identity-building events, whose political effectiveness is limited: *"I don't think the protests would do anything, for the government, at least. . . . I think it's more about us than anyone else. Yeah, I think it's more about us, like going out and being able to chant and say all of those things on that day. . . . I'm an Armenian, we went through a genocide. So it's much easier for us, just being relieved, to let that off our chests for a bit."*

Despite the perceived uselessness of demonstrations for influencing policy changes within the Israeli government, these community events provide opportunities for Armenian youth to engage in performances of transnational memory, through which they shore up ethnonational identities and forge transnational allegiances.

Even though diaspora mobilizations may function as acts of transnational citizenship, several Jerusalemite youth described tensions between the homeland and the diaspora related to the Artsakh issue and the Genocide. Such tensions often raised challenging questions about their identities. As an Israeli citizen, Levon described the criticism he received on Facebook during and after the Artsakh War because of Israel's involvement in supplying arms to Azerbaijan: *"We were criticized a lot by other Armenians because we live here. . . . Because of the selling, you know? They call us, "Jew," you know, "Go to your weapons-selling government. . . . You don't belong to Armenia, it's not your country, you have an Israeli passport."*

While Levon previously declared his transnational allegiance to Armenia as “my nation,” his loyalty - and even ethnonational identity - is called into question by homeland nationals due to his legal citizenship status and Israeli complicity in the Armenian defeat. Recalling family vacations to Armenia, Lilit also discussed how she does not feel as if she belongs in the homeland, despite the patriotic displays of “Armenianness” during the community protests which she recounted earlier:

When we go to Armenia, they look at us as foreigners . . . . And that’s because of the Genocide. . . . There are tensions between two Armenians, one from Armenia and one from the diaspora. . . . I thought to myself, “Where do I belong?” It’s a bit cheesy. You don’t belong in Armenia because they think you’re an outsider. You don’t belong in your country. It’s just, it’s part of the identity that you learn in school, eventually.

Lilit reiterated a lack of belonging in Israel, where her diaspora Armenian identity, grounded in memories of the Genocide, is not recognized, and the protective walls of the *vank* preserve Armenian roots while preventing youth from assimilating within local Israeli and Palestinian societies. The experiences of Levon and Lilit shed light on how transnationalized memories of the Armenian Genocide and the Artsakh conflict inform both local and transnational practices of citizenship and belonging.

## **Concluding Remarks**

One hundred and six years after the Armenian Genocide, intergenerational memories remain at the forefront of diaspora consciousness. Within the Jerusalem Armenian community, Genocide memories function as both unifying and isolating forces of identity construction as diaspora youth engage in practices of postmemory and past presencing within a transnational field. Intergenerational memories, collected stories, and inherited trauma are key factors in youth identity construction, as the past is linked with the present four generations after the Genocide and given renewed meaning in light of Armenian losses during the Second Artsakh War. The community school and organized demonstrations function as sites for intergenerational memory transmission and identity performance as youth engage in transnational acts of citizenship tied to an imagined Armenian transnation. As youth participate in these performances of memory - dramatizing survivor testimonies, carrying signs in protest, chanting slogans, and belting out patriotic songs - identities are molded as meaning is created through thoughts, feelings, and affects shaped by intergenerational memories. Given politics of non-recognition within Israel, diaspora mobilizations primarily serve as transnational identity-building events, while the locatedness of transnational memories also shapes citizenship practices at home. Yet homeland-diaspora tensions, and the complexity of the local socio-political landscape, present challenging questions about identity and belonging for Jerusalem’s Armenian youth. Lilit’s simple query of “Where do I belong?” reflects this intricate challenge of identity formation for Jerusalem’s Armenian youth. Such questions of belonging stem from the community’s marginalization, transmission of inter-

generational memories, non-recognition in local milieus, and regional geopolitics - all of which are, indeed, connected to the Genocide.

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