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The Turkish Genocide of the Armenians

Continuing Effects on Survivors and Their Families Eight Decades after Massive Trauma

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter will introduce to the psychological literature a traumatized group that is little known, although its story is 80 years old. When this group, the Armenians, first emerged from its catastrophic trauma after World War I, psychology was in its infancy. Moreover, there was no impetus for collecting this group's personal data, in contrast to the reparations requirements that produced much of the early literature on Holocaust survivors.

The story of the Armenians is not well known and will be summarized here. The descendants of the survivors have only recently turned to conducting studies relevant to understanding inter-generational issues. Two such studies are presented here, followed by two illustrative case studies.

THE HISTORY OF PERSECUTION

Eight decades ago, the Turkish government decided to kill or expel all members of an indigenous minority group. In 1915, under cover of World War I, Turkish armed forces systematically moved to exterminate Turkey's Armenian population.¹ By 1916, German officials

¹For scholarly and historical discussions, see, for example, Boyajian (1972), Dadrian (1995), Hovannisian (1967), Kuper (1981), Melson (1992), and Simpson (1993). For collections of official papers and eyewitness reports from the World War I era, see, for example, Adalian (1985, 1991–1993), Bryce (1916), Dadrian (1991), Davis (1989), Morgenthau (1975a), Toynebee (1916), and Sarafian (1993).

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stationed in Turkey reported that the campaign had killed 1.5 million Armenians, including 98% of the Armenian male population and 80–90% of the total Armenian population of Turkey (compiled in English in Dadrian, 1994a). These estimates did not count survivors driven out of Turkey or the victims of further massacres that occurred up to 1923 under the founders of the current Turkish government (Horowitz, 1980).

The Turkish government of that time hid this genocide as much as possible, and its successor has steadily denied it since, with a disinformation effort that has grown progressively more forceful, sophisticated, and public in recent years.² Lacking an accounting akin to the Nuremberg trials, the genocide and its continuing nonacknowledgment have become double assaults confronting Armenian survivors and their descendants.

Historical Background

Armenia is an ancient nation. Armenians continually occupied the region of historic Armenia, including what is now northeastern Turkey, from before 500 B.C. until their virtual annihilation in 1915 (Walker, 1991). Armenia was the first nation to accept Christianity as its state religion in A.D. 301.

Conquered by Turkic invaders from the east, Armenia was one of many nations made subject by what was eventually consolidated as the Ottoman Empire. The Turks considered this non-Muslim minority of Armenians as second-class citizens and for centuries subjected them to legal repression. For example, Armenians and other Christians had to pay special taxes, including child levies (Housepian, 1971; Hovannisian, 1985; Reid, 1984), and had to give Muslims and their herds free room and board for up to 6 months under the “hospitality taxes” (Housepian, 1971). In some areas, Armenians were barred from speaking Armenian except when praying (Hovannisian, 1985), and some localities punished public Armenian speaking by cutting out tongues (Housepian, 1971).³ Armenians were subject to forced migration, enslavement (Reid, 1984), and repeated massacres (e.g., Dadrian, 1995; Lidgett, 1897). Armenians were also barred from giving legal testimony or bearing arms, leaving them no legal recourse or self-defense against gun-bearing Muslim neighbors (Hovannisian, 1985; Kalfaian, 1982).

Ottoman imperial expansion led to periods of relative peace and prosperity for the subject populations. But as the empire began to decline, persecutions of all the various minorities increased. A particularly severe series of massacres occurred during 1895–1896, in which 100,000–200,000 Armenians were killed or driven out of the Armenian provinces (Dadrian, 1995; Lidgett, 1897). In 1909, there were renewed massacres of approximately 30,000 Armenians and other Christians (Boyajian, 1972; Dadrian, 1995).

The Ottoman Empire shrank rapidly as scores of independent nations broke free. The Turkish government was determined to unify the empire’s remnants, which they now considered Turkish heartland, as a homogeneous, Turkish-speaking population of Turkic peoples.⁴ They decided to eliminate the Armenians (Dadrian, 1994b) and began doing so in April 1915.

²For a typology and annotated bibliography of Turkish historical revisionism, see Adalian (1992); for discussions of Turkish patterns of denial, see, for example, Charny (1993), Dobkin (1984), Gunter (1993), Guroian (1988), Hovannisian (1988), Melson (1992), Minasian (1986–1987), Papazian (1993), and Simpson (1993); for instances of Turkish governmental pressure, see, for example, Boven (1985), Charny (1983), Cohen (1983), Miller (1990), and Smith, Markusen, and Lifton (1995).

³When the first author interviewed elderly Armenians in 1992, several spontaneously mentioned that as children in pre-genocide Turkey, they had known Armenian men in their villages whose tongues had been so cut out.

⁴See, for example, Dekmejian (1988), Hovannisian (1985), Libaridian (1985), and Melson (1992).

The regime carefully controlled the effort.⁵ It removed any possibility of defense or leadership from the Armenian population by disarming and killing all Armenian men in the Turkish army and arresting and killing all current or potential community leaders, including the intelligentsia, religious leaders, merchants, and civil servants. The remaining men were then rounded up and killed.

The women, children, and elderly were either forced into slavery or onto death marches, and they were frequently attacked by specially organized gangs. They were often held without food for days before the march began, so that they would be too weak to escape (German missionary quoted in Morgenthau, 1975b), and forced to march on the most circuitous, difficult paths, to maximize attrition through exhaustion (e.g., German eyewitness report in Hoffman, 1985). They were deliberately refused water (e.g., Barton, 1918) and had to buy or scrounge food. Many subsisted on grass. In some areas, Greeks, Jews, and other non-Turkic groups were also forced onto death marches along with the Armenians (Simpson, 1993).

A German missionary in Turkey recorded typical eyewitness reports of German railway engineers (Hoffman, 1985, p. 77). One reported "corpses of violated women, lying about naked in heaps on railway embankment[s] . . . with clubs pushed up their anus." Another saw "Turks tie Armenian men together, fire several volleys of small shot . . . and go off laughing, while their victims perished. . . . Other men had their hands tied behind their backs and were rolled down steep cliffs" to be slashed at by women with knives. He added that a German Consul told him that he had seen so many severed children's hands lying on a road that he could have paved the road with them. At the German hospital at Urfa, he knew of a little girl who had both her hands hacked off.

Survival rates from the marches were very low. For example, German eyewitnesses reported that out of 19,900 Armenians from the three towns of Sivas, Kharpuz, and Erzerum, only 361 reached the last stop before being driven into the desert, with unknown result (Dobkin, 1984). Writing in 1988, Kuper states, "Thus ends the Armenian presence in Turkey, reduced from a population of about 2 million to less than 25,000 at the present time" (p. 52).⁶

ARMENIANS IN DIASPORA

The remnants of the Armenians were scattered throughout the globe after World War I, to whatever countries would accept refugees. Outside the Middle East or Russian Armenia, these refugees were often the first and only Armenians, and even there, the preexisting community's resources were vastly overwhelmed by the survivors' extraordinary destitution. The severely traumatized, utterly impoverished refugees were on their own in foreign lands, among people who often knew nothing about them.

In the United States, these new immigrants frequently settled in tight-knit ethnic urban communities (Mirak, 1983). Their world was starkly split between the outside world of strangers and their inner, shared world of intimate community. Social gatherings often concluded with the survivor generation's talk of the genocide, accompanied by quiet weeping and consoling. This central emotional fact of life was essentially unknown by outsiders.

⁵This overview is taken largely from the summary in Kuper (1981, pp. 101–119).

⁶This number does not, however, account for the descendants of the thousands of Armenian women, girls, and small children forced into Turkish households as slaves or family members. Many thousands of their descendants are now passing as Turks in Turkey. It is a question whether they know, or are willing to disclose, their identity. The effect on them is unknown, and it may not ever be possible to learn what it has been like for these part-Armenian people to live as members of the group that exterminated their mothers' forebears.

The traumatized remnants of the Armenian people were swept up with everyone else by the Great Depression and the new horrors of World War II, which relegated the Armenian genocide to historical obscurity. Frequent nonrecognition of their plight surrounded Armenians with an experience of indifference and disregard.

TRAUMATIC AFTEREFFECTS

The historical situations culminating in the genocide of the Armenians and the destruction of the Jews resemble one another (Melson, 1992). So do the reactions of the survivors (Boyajian & Grigorian, 1982, 1988; Salerian, 1982).⁷ Although some details differ, both groups were targeted because of their birth membership in a despised group. The level of obliterating massive trauma and the deeply personal nature of the persecutors' hatred has made for parallels in the reaction of survivors and their families.

Boyajian and Grigorian (1982), in their study of psychosocial sequelae of the genocide, found symptoms among Armenian survivors that are similar to those of Holocaust survivors, including anxiety, depression, compulsive associations to trauma-related material, guilt, nightmares, irritability, anhedonia, emptiness, and a fear of loving. Salerian (1982) adds phobias, psychosomatic disorders, and severe personality changes. Boyajian and Grigorian's subsequent (1988) study of Armenian survivors, their second-generation children, and third-generation grandchildren, concludes that most participants experienced anxiety, anger, frustration, and guilt. Second-generation participants reported manifestations of anxiety in association with extreme parental overprotectiveness. Anger and frustration for all generations were associated with modern Turkey's denial of the genocide and other governments' tolerance of that denial. One participant, a self-described pacifist, was concerned because his 11-year-old son verbalized angry, militant ideas, and vengeful feelings.

Cultural differences, however, may give rise to some varied responses in the two victim groups. For example, survivor guilt has been described as a major manifestation of the survivor syndrome among Jewish Holocaust survivors (Krystal & Niederland, 1968; Niederland, 1981). Danieli (1988) has described various defensive and coping functions of survivor guilt for this population, including a commemorative function. In this function, guilt serves to maintain a connection and a bridge of loyalty to those who perished and to metaphorically provide the respectful regard of a cemetery that these victims were denied.

However, this guilt experience may not have a parallel among Armenians. For example, a comparison of Armenian and Jewish literary responses to these two genocides noted that the sense of remorseful guilt in some Jewish writings is largely absent from Armenian literature (Perroomian, 1993). In Boyajian and Grigorian's sample, the respondents' guilt was associated with duties to the living (i.e., not having done enough for the Armenian community) and, among the second generation, not having done enough for their survivor parents. The commemorative function of guilt may not be as imperative or culturally supported among Armenians on a personal level because of their Christian belief in the afterlife. The psychological function of commemoration may be adequately served on a community level by the Church service of commemoration for the genocide victims. Also, Turkey's active, ongoing denial of

⁷The authors know of only four other psychological studies of Armenian genocide survivors in the English language: Kalayjian *et al.* (1996), and Sarkissian (1984), two studies of coping in Armenian survivors; Kupelian (1993), an assessment of PTSD symptomatology and general adjustment in Armenian survivors; and Miller and Miller (1993), an oral-history project based on 100 survivor interviews, which offers a very thoughtful and sensitively described typology of responses by the authors who are not mental health professionals.

their victimization may have created an abiding anger that overshadows any experience of guilt for surviving and prospering.

However, another factor may be parallel on the individual level but different on the community level. Regarding Jewish Holocaust survivors, Danieli (1982, 1984, 1989) has described the effect of the "conspiracy of silence" between survivors and those who did not go through the Holocaust: the tacit but strongly motivated agreement to avoid acknowledging the Holocaust experience because it was simply too overwhelming to face. Such avoidance left Holocaust survivors profoundly rebuffed, alienated, and mistrustful. It sustained their silence, and impeded their ability to mourn, integrate, and heal; it helped to isolate them from others, including other Jews who had not shared their experience.

The silence for the Armenians differed in one important regard. It came from outside the community. The silence did not tend to create a chasm within the Armenian community, because the genocide had affected virtually all Armenians. The silence, particularly as time passed, existed because the story had simply faded for most non-Armenians, not because of any tacit agreement to avoid a known source of overwhelming pain.

Nonetheless, the effect of nonacknowledgment from the outside world on individual Armenian genocide survivors was very similar; they felt alienated and dishonored, their sufferings pointless. The effect of silence from outside sustained an additional sense of obliterating invalidation for survivors and the entire Armenian community. It was not only the survivors' ability to mourn, integrate, and heal that was impeded, but it was also impeded for their progeny. Some Armenians clung more tenaciously to their brethren in the face of this external lack of acknowledgment; others melted into assimilation. However they reacted to the silence, all Armenians were faced with an additional emotional and psychological burden.

Boyajian and Grigorian speculate that the major divergence in the experience of Holocaust and Armenian genocide survivors—the fact that the world is well aware of one and largely oblivious to the other—has intruded on the experience of an Armenian identity for all Armenians since the genocide. This intrusion has forced Armenians to cope with Turkish hatred not only in the form of the genocide, but also in the form of trivializing and denigrating the survivors and their families by denying their victimization. They view the Turkish denial of the historical fact of the genocide as a psychological continuation of the genocide, and a second, continuing victimization. The purpose of genocide is to eradicate a people and a culture from the face of the earth; to deny their pain is to deny their humanity, and it psychologically serves the genocidal purpose.

THE ARMENIAN FAMILY IN THE POSTGENOCIDE AMERICAN DIASPORA

While Boyajian and Grigorian recognized the potential destructive power of the invalidating nonrecognition of trauma from without on the individual's experience of Armenianness, the potential supportive power from within the Armenian community and family was recognized and investigated in another study.

In 1987, Kassabian completed a three-generation exploratory study of survivor families that focused primarily on Armenian ethnic identity. It included grandparents who survived the genocide as children before coming to the United States and their U.S.-born adult children and grandchildren. The objective was to study, in the context of the massive loss of the survivor generation, the level of Armenian ethnic identity for each generation (the independent variable) and to relate that level to the dependent variables of Armenian family structure, family

congruence (degree of agreement on perceived family environment), and Armenian community cohesion.

The Measured Constructs

Armenian Ethnic Identity. The concept of Armenian ethnic identity should be understood in the context of centuries of repression. The sense of ethnic identity, formed over centuries and internalized by the survivors, formed the basis of what they transmitted to their progeny.

Several factors historically supported a coherent and persistent sense of Armenian ethnic identity within the Ottoman context. First, the Armenians' ancient origins and the preservation of their historic territory until World War I gave them a sense that they knew who they were in their own homeland. Second, the Armenian language, a unique early branch from the Indo-European root, is distinct from that of surrounding peoples. Third, the unique Armenian church, the first to separate theologically, has remained a central cultural unifying factor for almost 2,000 years. Fourth, the Millet system, the Ottoman administrative system of classifying non-Muslim communities by their religion, created a social distance between the subject minorities and the ruling Ottoman and strengthened the ethnocentrism of the various minority ethnic groups, ultimately supporting the effects of the three aforementioned factors on Armenian ethnic identity (Atamian, 1955).

Armenian Family Structure. The historical forces that maintained the sense of Armenian ethnic identity also affected the pregenocide Armenian family structure, which was formed through generations of family interactions in adaptation to historical conditions of oppression. This structure was internalized in the person through family relationships and came with the survivors into the diaspora.

Ackerman posits that "[a] family is intensely affected by either a friendly and supportive environment or by a hostile and dangerous one. . . . A social environment that imposes danger may cause a family to either crumble or react by strengthening its solidarity" (1958, p. 15). From research based on the recall of Armenian survivors, we learn that the Armenian family was organized into multigenerational communal groups of often more than 30 people living under one roof (Atamian, 1949; Kalfaian, 1982; Mazian, 1983; Villa & Matossian, 1982). These groupings were patriarchal, patrilineal, and patrilocal, and provided the individual's central core of values. Each individual received protection and definition from the patriarch's leadership and authority, for which he or she returned loyalty and cooperation. The individual's interest was subordinated to the common family goal (Atamian, 1955; Villa & Matossian, 1982).

The organization of the patriarchal *gerdastan* (extended family) was necessary for the Armenian family's survival. It provided some shielding against periodic raids and persecutions, and assured that some family group would remain. The Armenian family structure was also necessary for the Armenian individual's survival, as these communal groups were the only available method to maximize the likelihood of a given individual's surviving. Chaliand and Ternon (1983) describe the Armenian family as a "closed cell" that made survival possible in the presence of a permanent lack of security. In the wake of massacres, the family would withdraw into itself and heal as best it could. The periodic massacres amplified the social distance from the Turks, and this very social distance maintained the unique Armenian identity and family organization.

Armenian Family Congruence. The pregenocide Armenian *gerdastan* reflected the family's perception of the social environment: For Armenian families to have survived in the hostile environment, they needed a close-knit network of kin in which there was a high level of compliance regarding values and norms. They had to share fundamental beliefs and values that would translate into cooperation regarding basic family survival and life. This expectation of family interdependence, cohesion, and primacy of the family group is the template survivors brought to the New World.

Community Cohesion. Upon reaching the United States, Armenians quickly established formal and informal means for transmitting ethnic identity (Atamian, 1955; Kernaklian, 1967; Malcolm, 1919; Tashjian, 1947; Warner & Srole, 1945). Informal means included ethnically oriented family socialization (e.g., food, stories, songs, friends, and speaking Armenian). Formal means included founding organizations that are educational, religious, political, cultural, and charitable. The Armenian church was central: "[it] linked the widely scattered Armenians to their long and troubled past, their homeland, their language, their literature and their faith. It provided the Armenian-Americans with the centuries-long function of the church: the preservation of the culture from assimilation" (Mirak, 1983, p. 180).

The Measurements

Kassabian used six instruments. She constructed three for the interviews,⁸ adapting much from studies of Holocaust survivors and other ethnic groups. To confirm trauma level, she used the Massive Traumatic Loss Scale, a structured interview with the survivor generation. To measure Armenian ethnic identity, she used the Armenian Identity Scale, a measure of attitude, to assess the centrality of social and family relationships and language maintenance to a sense of Armenian identity, and the Armenian Activities Scale, a behavioral scale, to assess the frequency of selected ethnically oriented activities. She assessed the level of participation in both American and Armenian formal organizations (religious, educational, professional, social service, cultural, social, and political) by a self-report of participation.

The final two instruments were standardized scales. The Family Adaptability Cohesion Evaluation Scale, FACES II (Olson, Portner, & Bell, 1982), measures family adaptability, defined as the degree to which the family system is flexible and able to accommodate change, ranging from rigid to chaotic. The moderate or balanced range, a dimension of adaptability termed flexible-structured, depicts a viable range of healthy family structure. It also measures the family cohesion, defined as the emotional bonding between family members and the degree to which individuals are connected to or separated from their families, ranging from enmeshed to disengaged. As with adaptability, scores in the moderate balanced range of cohesion indicate the viable levels of family functioning.

The last scale, the Family Environment Scale (FES; Moos & Moos, 1981), measures the three primary dimensions of relationship, personal growth, and system maintenance within the family. It assesses the extent to which the family members of each generation perceive the family's social environment in similar terms.

Kassabian collected data from the survivors in face-to-face interviews. She hand-delivered or mailed self-report questionnaires to the second and third generations, which were filled out and returned via mail.

⁸The instruments, their development, and psychometric properties are available in Kassabian (1987). An additional instrument was constructed but not found useful, and is not reported on here.

Description of the Participants

The criteria for a family's inclusion were (1) that the survivor's child and grandchild were born and reared in the United States and (2) that there was at least one participant from each of three generations in one family. First, a survivor was located who would participate. The second-generation participant was usually the caretaking child, and then a third-generation family member who was willing to cooperate and at least 15 years old was included.

There were 22 survivors, 5 males and 17 females; 6 were married, 14 were widows, and 2 were widowers. Most (95.5%) were Armenian Apostolic, and 4.5% were Catholic. Their ages ranged from 72 to 88 years, with a mean of 78.7 years. In 1915, their ages had ranged from 3 to 19, with most (73%) between ages 6 and 13.

There were also 22 American-born second-generation respondents, 5 males and 17 females; 77.4% had married other adult children of survivors. A total of 86.4% had married within the ethnic group, while 13.5% had married non-Armenian spouses, and none were widowed or divorced. Their ages ranged from 43 to 62, with a mean of 51 years. Like their parents, 95.5% were Armenian Apostolic.

There were 28 third-generation respondents, 21 females and 7 males. Their ages ranged from 15 to 31, with a mean age of 22 years. Only 14.3% were married, 2 to Armenian spouses and 2 to non-Armenians. In this generation, 92.9% were Armenian Apostolic, 3.6% were American Protestant, and 3.6% indicated no religious affiliations.

Eleven other families were approached. Eight declined because the survivor did not want to discuss the genocide experience, one declined because the adult child of the survivor found the questionnaires intrusive, and one family declined without explanation. One family was disqualified because the grandchild would not cooperate.

Major Findings

Armenian Ethnic Identity. Armenian ethnic identity was operationalized by the Armenian Identity Scale and the Armenian Activities Scale, both of which were item-analyzed, emphasizing a qualitative analysis.

The three generations did not significantly differ in most attitudinal measures. These included the desire to maintain social contact in the Armenian community; to teach their children Armenian history, culture, and traditions; and, even among the third generation that largely had lost the Armenian language, to give their children Armenian language lessons. These results suggest that all three generations had a strong investment in their Armenian heritage.

However, the third generation differed from the older two generations on two items of the attitudinal measure. It reported a lower sense of belonging when in contact with other Armenians and a lower level of self-perceived Armenian identity than the two older generations. These results suggested that the third generation is more assimilated and may thus experience some sense of separation and loss.

The attitudinal measures indicate that the third generation feels a strong commitment to an Armenian ethnic identity. However, this generation's behavioral expression is different, as indicated by significant differences on virtually all items on the Armenian Activities Scale between the grandchildren and their older family members. The older generations' more traditional ethnic activities (cooking, listening to Armenian music, Armenian language activities, and regularly attending church services) are not part of the grandchildren's behavior. However, the three generations did not differ significantly in attending educational and cultural activities and certain particularly significant Church services. Although it did not worship regularly on

Sundays, Christmas, or Easter, the third generation marked important community life events with the most significant church rituals (baptisms, weddings, funerals, the annual church service commemorating the genocide, and an annual ritual mourning and memorial service for family and community members called the *Hokehankist*). This generation's greater commitment to the church's community function than to its theological, faith function suggests a deep commitment to the Armenian community.⁹

Family structure is conceptualized as having two central dimensions: adaptability and cohesion. The analyses indicated that the three generations were very similar in family structure.

Each of the three generations was in the structured–flexible range of adaptability, depicting a structured but flexible family functioning style. This style denotes a healthy functioning range. The scores reflect a moderate level of cohesion in each of the three generations. The moderate levels are the central balanced areas of cohesion hypothesized as the most viable for healthy family functioning, reflecting a balance of independence from families and connection to families. These findings indicate that the three generations have enough cohesion to develop a continuing attachment to their family of origin and to continue both a sense of ethnic identity and family structure. At the same time, cohesion must be moderate enough so that family members are not enmeshed in their family of origin and have enough energy for development of self and establishing their own families.

Family Congruence. The degree of family congruence is an assessment of the extent to which the family members of each generation perceive the family's social environment in similar terms. No significant differences were found in the mean scores for family perception across the three generations, indicating that the three generations perceive the family environment similarly.

Armenian Community Cohesion. Armenian community cohesion was defined as the level of participation in Armenian organizations. The first generation participated actively and exclusively in Armenian organizations. Those in the second generation met their expressive needs by participating in Armenian religious, social service, and cultural organizations more than American organizations serving the same purposes. Understandably, second-generation Armenians met their instrumental needs through American professional, educational, and political organizations, not Armenian ones.

Like their parents, the third generation followed the expected pattern of meeting expressive needs through Armenian organizations and meeting instrumental needs through American organizations. Surprisingly, their political activity differed. They were more active in Armenian political organizations than American ones. Responses to open-ended questions reveal that the impetus for this difference was largely due to the grandchildren's concern with addressing Turkey's continuing denial of the genocide and their expressed desire to "right the wrong."

Interpretation of Findings

A clear commitment to an Armenian ethnic identity continued throughout the generations, suggesting the family was able to protect and transmit that identity. The three generations shared a similar perception of the family environment, as indicated by the similar family congruence scores, suggesting that they share a mutual sense of values. The family structure

⁹Studies of American-born Armenian high school students, a cohort similar to Kassabian's third generation, have found similar trends of high self-reports of Armenian ethnic identity associated with frequent Armenian church and Armenian political activities, and low involvement in other traditional ethnic activities (Der-Karabetian, 1980).

scores indicate a balance of adaptability and cohesion. The adaptability affords the family the flexibility to accommodate extraordinary changes over the three generations, with optimal cohesion for keeping the family together. The sampled families were able to weather the genocide and acclimate to a new country. The community cohesion levels indicate that the community offered adequate support and responsiveness to sufficiently strengthen the family in transmitting a coherent Armenian ethnic identity.

While close-knit families are expected in ethnic family structure, the three generations' high degree of similarity was surprising. Their consistency in both the adaptability and the cohesion scores of the family structure measure stood out. It is congruent with historical descriptions of Armenian family coping strategies within the context of five centuries of Turkic persecutions. This hostile external environment reinforced close intra- and interfamily relationships conducive to survival, both physically and as a distinct people. The family structure maintained closeness and structured flexibility, a combination that offered stability and the capacity to integrate the genocide's catastrophic changes and to adapt to the immediate postgenocide period and beyond.

Theoretical hypotheses offered by Olson *et al.* (1982) and others (Beavers, 1977; Bowen, 1978; Lidz, 1960; Lidz, Cornelison, Fleck, & Terry, 1957; Minuchin, Montalvo, Guernsey, Rossman, & Schumer, 1967; Reiss, 1971; Stierlin, 1974; Wynne, Ryckoff, Day, & Hirsch, 1958) conceptualized these constructs of adaptability and cohesion necessary for variable family functioning. Historical descriptions of the Armenian family's functioning throughout its turbulent existence indicate its survival strategies of "closing up" to the outside world to regroup and then "opening up" temporarily when the acute danger passed. These phenomena fit the conceptualizations proposed by the aforementioned theorists of healthy family functioning and show the balance of adaptability and stability needed for survival and growth.

To survive, the Armenian family had to have relied on its experience of what constituted danger or safety. When acting against hostile events, it recognized what was hopeless, reacted with a realistic appraisal of powerlessness, shut down affectively with an experience of depression, and withdrew. By the same token, it had the potential to renew interest in the world and act on opportunities when hostile events abated, as demonstrated in the third generation. The changed outward circumstance (the nonhostile U.S. environment) has removed its need for a depressed communal response.

The difference between the second and third generations in how the painful history is regarded is shown in the response to the open-ended question, "Do you feel different from other people because of the genocide experience of your parents/grandparents?" The second and third generation both answered "yes." One third-generation participant typified the determination "to identify in history the Turkish government of 1915 as the perpetrators of the Armenian genocide and the present Turkish government as an accomplice to the crime because of that government's refusal to admit the occurrence of the genocide and accept the responsibility for the brutal acts of its predecessor" (Kassabian, 1987, p. 143).

The second generation's responses lacked this insistence on Turkish accountability. Second-generation respondents expressed feelings of anger, loss for their homeland and family, immense pride that Armenian culture could not be extinguished, and determination to perpetuate Armenian heritage and culture. The first and second generations of the sample put a lifetime of effort into maintaining their group cohesion and thereby making it possible to transmit the sense of ethnic identity to younger generations. The third generation's effort is more externalized and differs from the second generation's more internalized response, which focused primarily on keeping the Armenian culture alive and strong. The reactions of the older generations reflected a historical paradigm of overt limitation by Ottoman society and the postgeno-

cide chaos, eliciting an intensely private communal opposition and consolidation. The youngest generation's response is to a newer paradigm of American freedom and respect for human rights that allows for a more open appeal for redress of injustices.

Spicer (1971) has suggested that opposition is a primary factor in a persistent ethnic identity. Armenians perpetuated a distinct identity for centuries by adapting their family structure to a persecutory context. Functionally, the persecutory oppositional pressure (the recurring massacres up to the genocide) became an integral part of Armenian family structure and identity. Each generation in its own way opposed the intended effects of annihilation and unified the Armenian community to withstand those effects. By existing with an Armenian self-awareness, each family has transmitted this opposition from generation to generation. Ironically, the psychological continuation of the genocide, the active Turkish denial, has provided the psychological oppositional pressure that has maintained the effect of a persistent ethnic identity.

THIRD-GENERATION EFFECTS IN AN OLDER COHORT

Kassabian's third-generation cohort was two generations away from the 1915 genocide. A different starting point defined the third-generation cohort in the following study (Kupelian, 1993), when it was two generations away from massacres of the mid-1800s. Kupelian's study of Armenian genocide survivors¹⁰ produced an unexpected finding within the control group concerning a subgroup of grandchildren of survivors of pregenocide massacres.

Description of Participants

In Kupelian's study, all subjects were Armenians born during the genocide period, (1923 or before) and were from a nonclinical, community population. When interviewed in 1992, the control group ranged between 70 and 90 years of age, with a mean of 75.75. While the control group (the only group discussed here) was of the same age range as the genocide survivors, they did not go through the genocide. Most came from families who had fled Turkey in the 1800s, after earlier massacres. There were 34 participants in the control group, 22 females and 12 males. They were 1 to 20 years old in 1923, at the end of the genocide.

Method and Analysis

Kupelian recorded the number of generations separating each control subject from their ancestor's direct experience of massacres in Turkey. Thirteen were one generation away (second-generation children), 10 were two generations away (third-generation grandchildren), and 11 were three or more generations away from massacres.

All participants were assessed for symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) via the clinician-administered Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-III-R (SCID) PTSD module (Spitzer, Williams, Gibbon, & First, 1989). In addition, the following self-report measures were used to assess current adaptation: the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS; Roid & Fitts, 1989), the Life Satisfaction Scale (LSI; Neugaraten, Havighurst, & Tobin, 1961), and the Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI; Derogatis & Melisaratos, 1983), which also screened for psychopathology.

A series of one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted for each assessment scale listed here, using as the subject grouping factor the generational distance from massacres

¹⁰Due to space limitations, only those findings of this study relevant to intergenerational issues are presented here.

(one, two, or three or more generations removed). In all cases, where the ANOVA was significant, appropriate contrasts were used to examine the difference in means.

Results and Discussion

The 10 grandchildren of survivors from pregenocide massacres scored significantly higher on several measures than other control subjects (those one generation away, and those three or more generations away). They scored significantly higher on the following: all three of the global BSI scales (the Positive Symptom Total indicating the number of symptoms endorsed, the Positive Symptom Distress Index indicating the degree of distress reported, and the General Severity Index indicating the overall pathology score), and also on the items of the SCID assessing symptoms of increased arousal. They also registered the highest self-esteem on the TSCS global measure.

The third generation's BSI scores indicate that they self-report an experience of more distress from a greater number of symptoms, and their SCID scores may suggest somatization. This nonclinical population also scored higher on the self-esteem measure, indicating that although they endorse and were observed to exhibit more symptomatology, they nonetheless indicate they feel better about themselves.

The third generation unexpectedly registered more pathology than the second generation. A potential explanation for this counterintuitive finding may involve two important situational factors: (1) the relatively small amount of social support available to the grandparents who left Turkey, and to the families they had in the new country; and most importantly (2) the occurrence of the genocide during the childhood of the third generation in this study, a historical fact that must have been a devastating emotional blow to every Armenian already in diaspora. Virtually all of them still had family in Turkey.

When the grandparents arrived in the United States in the late 1800s, the very few other Armenians in America tended to congregate in small communities. The devastating traumas the grandparents had endured were generally unknown by non-Armenians outside of Turkey. These immigrants may have found trusting non-Armenians difficult after so many generations of crushing persecution from a majority culture. The small Armenian communities would probably have provided any validating support and solace the immigrants could have received.

The third-generation Armenians in this study were children during the time of the Armenian genocide and observed that cataclysm from safety. What must it have been like for those children and their families to watch helplessly the virtual destruction of their kind in their homeland? For all Armenians, the certainty that every single person in their ethnic group was despised and desired dead may have been a significant narcissistic blow. Their parents, especially, would have confronted several difficult pressures. The parents would certainly have been acutely sensitive to this catastrophic repetition of their own parents' experience. The genocide may have exacerbated whatever past painful experience the parents had or knew about in their own family history. They may have lost their last hopes of returning to the homeland. Most painfully, they probably knew relatives were going through the death marches.

The presumably intense reactions to these pressures, whatever form those reactions took, may have affected family interactions and the ability of the stressed parents to cushion the children's emotional distress. The hypothesized emotional pressures on the entire family observing the genocide during the childhood of this third-generation cohort may be related to their observed scores. The presumed emotional pressures experienced during their childhood may have left this group more vulnerable and reactive to pain, reflected in their higher pathology scores. If they drew meaning from this pain and took pride in their continued existence as Armenians, then that may be related to their higher self-esteem scores. Ongoing research is in-

vestigating whether this unexpected finding in a small sample replicates in a larger sample of the same cohort. As the generations proceed from the 1915–1923 genocide and earlier massacres, many changes, both inside and outside the Armenian community and family, affect the manifestation of the elder generation's trauma in its children and grandchildren.

INTERGENERATIONAL EFFECTS OF TRAUMA

Some, but not all, children of severely traumatized Holocaust survivors suffer pathological consequences (e.g., Davidson, 1980; Kestenberg, 1972; Klein, 1971; Krell, 1982; Steinberg, 1989). Intergenerational consequences may be the most accurate term (Albeck, 1994), recognizing the widely varying situational factors, survivor reactions, and the responses of succeeding generations to their family history. For survivors' children, a crucial factor is the degree to which the meaning of the trauma has been integrated into the family's emotional life.* Lifton (1969) has suggested using a structured, psychohistorical interview with this population to elicit information it might not otherwise perceive as salient. Kalayjian, Shahinian, Gergerian, and Saraydarian (1996) found two variables unique to the Armenian survivor community: (1) the meaning construed by the individual of the profoundly invalidating experience of the denial of the genocide by Turkey, and (2) the degree of the family's involvement in the Armenian community.

For those survivor's children who do suffer pathological consequences, a heuristic explanation of intergenerational effects in the cause of Holocaust survivor's children describes behaviors of these children as (1) originating dynamically either in symbolic relationship to their parents' trauma, or (2) as shaped by their parents' trauma-related pathogenic behaviors (Danieli, 1988). The two following cases reported by Kalayjian, illustrate these points in relation to Armenian families.

CASE STUDIES OF AMERICAN-BORN SECOND-GENERATION ARMENIANS

The first case study demonstrates that in a family where catastrophic loss has been suffered with very little apparent integration of the trauma, separation–individuation would be experienced as a crisis and another overwhelming loss, resulting in an enmeshed family. This is an example of a child's reaction to the parent's trauma-related pathogenic behavior (Danieli, 1988).

Ms. S., a 44-year-old U.S.-born only child, had a masters degree and a responsible position. She came for treatment after suffering intolerable rejection when her boyfriend excluded her from a professional activity. She had moved out of her parents' home in her late 30s to live with him, and although deeply wounded by his autonomy, did not break off the relationship. The treatment quickly focused on her difficulty separating from her parents.

It took several sessions to elicit the fact that her father was a death march survivor, because she viewed events of nearly eight decades before as irrelevant to her life. This suggests a difficulty in her family in recognizing, articulating, and tolerating affects.

Ms. S. described her father, aged 83 and a shoemaker, as a workaholic who refused to retire, and who never stopped. Her father was 12 when the genocide began. Turkish gendarmes arrested

*After the manuscript of this chapter was completed, a chapter by Dagirmanjian (1996) came to our attention that offers a psychocultural description of the Armenian community, and further illustrates the importance of the construed meaning of the trauma in the family's life.

his father in the middle of the night, and he never returned. Ms. S.'s father and his family of eight were forced onto a death march, from which only he and his mother survived. Ms. S. knew little of his genocide experience because he rarely talked about it without becoming tearful and overwhelmed by emotion, which he found intolerable.

Ms. S.'s mother, age 69, was born in a Syrian refugee camp to parents who had survived months of forced marches through the desert. She told her daughter few details of her parents' genocide story. When Ms. S. entered puberty, her mother had begun to suffer asthma attacks when distressed. Like her husband, Ms. S.'s mother was extremely involved in the social network of the local Armenian community.

Ms. S.'s mother was the eldest child. Clinical reports indicate that the eldest child born to Holocaust survivor parents shortly after the trauma in displaced persons camps was often severely affected (Danieli, 1982; Freyberg, 1980; Grubrich-Simitis, 1981; Russell, 1974). In this case, the mother's somaticized style suggests that she had difficulty perceiving her own affect consciously and in the verbal realm, her feelings did not become symbolically articulated (Krystal, 1988; Stolorow & Atwood, 1992). She may have lacked early validating responsiveness, which is very possible with two recently highly traumatized parents. If she never learned to translate affect experienced first as physical sensation into the cognitive and verbal realm, she cannot be expected to have helped her daughter make this translation successfully.

Her father's obsessive defense warded off intolerable affect. His manifest reaction to his own genocide story, avoiding it or being overwhelmed by it, suggests that he communicated an inability to tolerate the range of affect he needed to confront in order to integrate his trauma. A child who perceives that a parent cannot tolerate certain affects will stop experiencing and expressing those affects to protect the bond with that parent. In a family with a tenuous translation of affect from the physical to the verbal realm, the alienating effects of this translation will further attenuate it for that child (Stolorow & Atwood, 1992). Ms. S. would thus be unable to know or regulate her feelings.

Based on Ms. S.'s description, her family resembled the closed system with few internal boundaries of the *victim family* (Danieli, 1985). For example, her mother freely went through Ms. S.'s personal mail and belongings, and whenever Ms. S. objected, her mother acted surprised and hurt. This engendered anger and guilt in Ms. S., in a stable pattern of intrusion and ineffectual resentment. Her mother's constant worry, depression, and clinging exemplified the family atmosphere.

The norm that "No one outside the family could be trusted" had ingrained a distrust into Ms. S., which maintained a strong familial overinvolvement and impeded her from establishing meaningful outside relationships. Ms. S. had long reciprocated overinvolvement and overprotectiveness. Her parents' mediator, she often came home from school early as an adolescent to ensure that her parents did not fight and that her mother did not have what the daughter feared might be a potentially fatal asthma attack.

Ms. S. worked obsessively like her father to "get ahead" and somaticized like her mother (emotional distress triggered severe menstrual cramps and migraines, with no apparent medical cause). She did not have the insight to recognize parallels with her parents' defensive styles.

When Ms. S. tried to separate, her mother reacted with asthma attacks and guilt-inducing remarks. Her father tried to shame her into compliance by asking, "What would the Armenian community, our relatives, and friends say?" Ms. S. responded with immobilizing guilt, and the family's enmeshment was effectively maintained, a dynamic she brought to her relationship with her boyfriend.

The second case illustrates the sensitivity to invalidation in a case of PTSD, which echoes the ultimate invalidation the survivor parent suffers from Turkish denial. This case, in which the daughter echoes in her symptom picture the repeating affront of profoundly devaluing denial that all Armenians struggle against, is an example of a child manifesting symptomatology that is in symbolic relationship to the parents' traumatic experience (Danieli, 1988).

Ms. M. was a 42-year-old U.S.-born woman with a graduate degree and professional occupation. Ms. M. came for treatment after being severely traumatized in a car accident. She had nightmares that she could not recall and woke up with symptoms of a panic attack. She also had flashbacks, difficulty concentrating, and angry emotional outbursts that were uncharacteristic of her pre-morbid functioning. Her appetite decreased markedly, and she lost 10 pounds in less than 2 weeks.

Ms. M. had suffered another traumatic car accident 5 years earlier, which she said “was just like this one,” although the situations were quite different. The similarity she perceived was in the lack of validation. According to Ms. M., she had not been at fault in either incident. However, her accounts of the events were disputed by the other drivers; therefore the police and insurance agents also challenged her accounts of both incidents. While she had not been clearly ruled against in either case, the authorities had divided the responsibility and settlements to avoid protracted investigation.

She believed the other drivers’ claims were inaccurate and felt wronged by what she interpreted as a lack of vindication. Undoubtedly suffering from PTSD, she nonetheless reported that the most painful aspect was the indifference of and invalidation by the insurance agents and police officers who were traumatizing her “all over again.” She saw parallels with a robbery 10 years earlier, when she interrupted a thief in her apartment. Although he stole her heirloom jewelry, the trauma to her was the indifference of the police. As she repeatedly went through mug shots, she experienced their jaded lack of sympathy as intolerable invalidation and an uncaring abandonment of her.

Ms. M. believed it was critical that the fact of victimization be confronted and the story be known, understood, and honored. This belief echoed her interest in her mother’s extreme genocide experience and reaction to the Turkish denial. Ms. M.’s maternal grandfather was one of the first intellectuals rounded up in 1915. Her mother’s 40-person *gerdastan* was forced onto a death march. Ms. M.’s mother, then a 10-year-old girl, saw most of them murdered, including her pregnant mother, who had collapsed and had told her daughter to leave her there and to take care of her six younger siblings. Turkish gendarmes then cut out and killed the infant before murdering the mother, while cursing her with racial epithets. Mrs. M.’s mother continued the march but could not save her siblings. Four died. Two were taken by Kurdish villagers. At the end of the death march, American missionaries took Ms. M.’s mother to an orphanage in Lebanon.

Ms. M.’s father had come to the United States before World War I. When he learned his second cousin (Ms. M.’s mother-to-be) had survived the genocide, he offered to marry her. He felt fortunate to have escaped the genocide but also guilty for not staying behind to help his relatives.

Although her mother rarely spoke of her experience, Ms. M. concentrated on reconstructing her mother’s genocide story from her mother’s notes in the family Bible, and stories told by other relatives. Her mother confirmed her research, but did not add much. Ms. M. also became extremely knowledgeable about the genocide and conducted surveys on that topic in the Armenian community.

A critical motivating theme that ran through Ms. M.’s family was the painful issue of coping with the Turkish denial. The entire family was active in the Armenian community and participated in all genocide commemorations. Ms. M.’s need to learn and validate the story was in the context of that story’s intentional denial.

Ms. M. associated the Turkish denial, perceived as a second and continuing attempt at obliteration, to her experiences of invalidation respecting the car accidents and robbery. Invalidation meant that someone had gotten away with a horrendous act, and that the victim’s survival was not valued, respected, cared about, or even much noticed. She felt such invalidation repudiated the victims’ right to exist. Ms. M. clung to an underlying fantasy of a just world and emotionally railed at injustice and at nonacknowledgment of victimization. Her reactions were deeply rooted in her parents’ experience of invalidation by the world for the devastating traumas they endured.

CONCLUSION

A history of persecution, genocide, and exile reverberates in the Armenian family. Much of what has been found in the literature on Holocaust survivors applies also to Armenian survivors, despite some cultural and situational differences (e.g., as noted earlier regarding the

experience of survivor guilt). Clearly, more research, beyond the exploratory work presented here, is needed to more fully delineate the unique qualities of the Armenian experience. More studies would help not only in understanding the Armenian experience, but also in better understanding how differing cultural and situational factors affect traumatic responses.

The Armenian family adapted its structure to an ever-present oppositional pressure over centuries of persecution, and this oppositional pressure has become a habitual presence in the formation of the individual Armenian's ethnic identity. Currently, Turkish denial of the genocide psychologically continues the historic persecutions.

The rage and stress created by Turkey's denial, and the widespread acquiescence to that denial, has interfered with the ability of the survivors, their children, and grandchildren to mourn, process, and integrate their deeply painful history. According to Sullivan (1953), validation of a traumatic experience is an essential step toward resolution and closure. In addition, a perpetrator's explicit expression of acknowledgment and remorse has enormous value in healing the victim (Montville, 1987). Obviously, such healing has not taken place for these survivors.

The struggle for victims and the generations who proceed from them is to defy the dominance of evil and find a way to restore a sense of justice and compassion to the world. It adds to the pain, to know that so much more pain came after the Armenian genocide, and could have been stopped, but was not. It was not stopped because justice was not done for the Armenians, and Hitler saw that and learned the lesson of audacity and the permission of indifference. Survivors of great injustices feel a need to bear witness, to speak the truth, to keep it from happening again. But Armenians cannot say "never again" because it did happen again, and when it did, it was modeled on the Armenian genocide. Hitler has been quoted twice (Bardakjian, 1985; Loftus, 1993) as noting how effectively, with what impunity, and with what universal indifference the Armenians were exterminated. When the extermination of the Armenians was made negligible, the exterminations of the Holocaust were made possible.

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