"A Jerusalemite Armenian. That's a thing of its own"

A Case Study about Identity, Agency and Structure among Armenian women

Susanne Falk
Abstract

This thesis is an analyses of interviews and observations in the Armenian quarter of Jerusalem. It explores the identity and agency of twelve women in a patriarchal context. A context furthermore marked by religion and several conflicts. The aim is to increase knowledge about this unique environment. In order to encompass the complexity of the interplay between the individual women and the surrounding society, a combination of discourse-, structuration- and intersectional theory, has been consulted. The case study illustrates how the women’s individual agency is connected to negotiations of a Jerusalemite Armenian identity, in relation to outlook and social space. Attention is especially given to the identity markers gender, ethnicity and age. These are, together with education, career, marriage and religion, understood to influence the women’s latitude. While individual freedom is of great importance for a few, the majority direct their efforts to exercise agency to the benefits of their community.

Keywords: Identity, Religion, Conflict, Agency, Armenian women, Jerusalem
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Chapter 1 Introduction

In this chapter an introduction about the study will be presented together with the purpose and aim, research question, limitations and background of the research.

1.1. Introduction

"Today you’re not only an Armenian, you’re a Jerusalemite Armenian. That's a thing of its own". The woman in front of me emphasizes her last words. Her statement aptly revealed the connection between identities and contexts. At the intersection between these, I expected to receive answers to my questions concerning the agency of Armenian women in the Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem. I had come to this complex and fragmented city to investigate what measure of latitude they experience – as women, Armenians and individuals – in a society marked by religion, patriarchy, and conflict. Conflict refers to both inner and outer struggles that are amplified by the religious and political situation in Jerusalem. As this milieu is believed to be of scientific interest in its own right, it qualifies as a unique case study. This thesis will discuss how various expressions of a Jerusalemite Armenian identity and outlook present women with resources next to culturally specific restrictions. It will portray how individual freedom is of great importance for a few, while a majority of the women give priority to community.

The first time I was introduced to the Armenian community was during a minor field study in February 2015. Whereas there were aspects I could easily relate to on an interpersonal level, and as a Christian, it was obvious that the prevalent paradigm was different from my secular hometown Stockholm. I was intrigued by how the exotic blended with the familiar. As the proud reports of a rich heritage mixed with accusations of a broad global negligence of the historical plight of the Armenians, I started to make plans to return in order to learn more. Something which proved to be not only more difficult but also more multifaceted than expected. For many Armenians to be survivors of a genocide continues to be an unmistakable
part of the identity. It is said to imply certain obligations to the community.\(^1\) Armenian-American professor Arlene Voski Avakian has raised concerns that this burden threatens to obscure other urgent matters from being addressed. In particular gender issues. According to Avakian the lack of reflection on the patriarchal Armenian history leads to the reproduction of gender essentialism.\(^2\) Her reflections together with the patriarchal nature of the context made me realize that I need to make room for gender issues in this study. It has been pointed out that history has most often represented his story, while her story has been left out. How gender influences the women’s agency will therefore be analysed, along with ethnicity as well as the individual factors of age and religious convictions. It will be argued that these categories have an impact on this.

1.2. Purpose and aim

The purpose of this study is to explore the agency of Armenian women in the Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem. By agency I refer to the means and influence a person has concerning her own life and circumstances. I will examine the amount of latitude the women perceive as women, Armenians and individuals in a predominately patriarchal context.\(^3\) A context furthermore marked by religion and several conflicts.\(^4\) Identity categories of gender, ethnicity and age will be analysed, as they are believed to have an impact on the interplay of the women and the surrounding society, its norms and values.\(^5\) Attention will also be given to what the women perceive as their possibilities and challenges in relation to religion, education, career and marriage. The latter three are connected to gender equality.\(^6\) The unique environment calls for a descriptive aim in order to increase knowledge.

\(^1\) Bakalian 1993:353  
\(^2\) Voski Avakian 2010:3  
\(^3\) Ibid 2010:3  
\(^4\) The context will be discussed in more detail in chapter 1.5. Background and 2.1. The symbiotic composition of the Armenian Quarter.  
\(^5\) Lykke 2003:53, Hedström & Senarathna 2015:17  
\(^6\) UN SDG Goal 5
1.3. Research question

In a religious and patriarchal context, what agency – as women, Armenians and individuals of different ages and religious convictions – do women of the Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem experience?

In order to answer this the following inquiries will also guide the analysis:

1. How do the women relate to *gender, ethnicity and age*?
2. What are the women’s views on *education, marriage, career and religion*?
3. How is the context of Jerusalem perceived to *restrict* and *provide resources* for the women in relation to the categories and topics mentioned in question 1 and 2?

1.4. Limitations

While there is a small Armenian Catholic community in the Christian Quarter and some Armenians in other cities in Israel and Palestine, I have limited my research to the Armenian Quarter. The very distinct attributes of this milieu are the reasons for this. In order to keep the research more focused I decided not to address the Armenian genocide in the interviews. Despite its effect on subsequent generations and gender, as mentioned in the introduction, it is a highly delicate matter that would deserve a study of its own. As expected it was mentioned in some interviews, nevertheless it will only be discussed when of importance for the research questions. Statistical material about Jerusalem and the region did not prove useful as it does not separate Armenians from other minority groups. In addition to these considerations regarding the material methodological limitations had to be made as well. Even though the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods have proved fruitful, I did not estimate it possible to produce a reliable questionnaire. One obstacle arises from language. While many speak good English, the language which we have in common, neither I nor the informants are native speakers. The time frame and cultural considerations influenced this decision as well. A theoretical limitation was to not include class in the analyses, as other categories were considered to be more crucial in this particular case.

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7 Bryman 2008:560, Cetrez & DeMarinis 2017:235
8 Giddens 1984:18
1.5. Background

Jerusalem is a cosmopolitan Middle Eastern city that has remained rather traditional, in many segments of society, even though influences from the West and globalization are apparent. In its old part, covering one-sixth of the Old City and centered around the Armenian Monastery of St James, lies the Armenian Quarter. As mentioned, the first time I learned about this Armenian community was during a short field trip in February 2015. Through a couple of priests and other influential men I was introduced to their rich religious and cultural history. The Patriarchate is a notable landlord as the majority of the residents in the convent consist of laypeople. This derives from the great influx of refugees in the aftermath of the Armenian genocide. The clergy saw no other option than to take them in. Most of the survivors remained and for a long time the community continued to grow while businesses flourished. It has been claimed that some people spent almost their whole life within the quarter as they had all they needed there. Despite their small numbers Armenians are an undeniable part of the multicultural fabric of Jerusalem. To be joint custodians of the Christian Holy places, next to the much bigger Greek and Latin denominations, is part of this.

1.5.1. Religion and conflict

Concern about the survival of the community has been raised. In recent years the trend to move abroad, in search for better education and work opportunities, has increased. Only between 400-1000 are said to be left in a community that peaked at between 15-20 000. Alarming reports claim that the region's indigenous Christian population might vanish altogether if the out-migration continues. Conflicts in the surrounding society are often said to contribute to this development. That all three Abrahamic religions consider the city of Jerusalem holy makes it even more complicated. Next to being a popular pilgrimage site and tourist destination there is a darker side to it. When religious matters are added to conflict, about territory or governmental concerns, it has been proved very difficult to solve. The holy places of the city

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9 Andersson 2011:51, 130-131
10 Since my first field study in February 2015 in the Armenian community, I have returned there several times. The time spent in Jerusalem, mostly in the Old city, is a total of about 12 months.
11 Dumper 2014:113
13 Gelfond Feldinger 29.06.2013, Der Matossian. 2011:26-30
15 Svensson 2012:181-185
are not only places for religious practice. They are deeply embedded in the identity of the different groups. 

1.5.2. Politics and conflict

The political situation is perceived as challenging for the minorities. Repeatedly Armenians present themselves as in between the fighting Israelis and Palestinians. The relationship to Jerusalem's majority of Jews often appears a bit strained. They are sometimes referred to as Israelis, although there are other ethnic groups that hold citizenship as well. Most of the minority population of the Old city have kept their Jordanian passports, since Jordan ruled the city up until the war in 1967. In her dissertation Ann-Catrin Andersson describes how the city politics strive to maintain a demographic 70/30 percent favor for the Jewish population. A measure also aimed to reinforce security for its majority. Contrary to many countries where ethnic segregation commonly is considered problematic, the Local Outline Scheme (2000) promotes "spatial segregation of the various population groups". Every group can thereby live as desired within their own cultural space. The Armenians tend to avoid to get directly involved in most of the conflicts. Additionally the conflicts appear to consolidate the Armenian identity even more. This will be discussed further in chapter 2.1.

1.5.3. Ethnicity

‘Armenianess’ is promoted on many levels in the community. During a field study among Armenian youth in the spring 2016 the identification as Armenian was prevalent also among the younger generations. Despite the mention of several conflicts a majority of them expressed hope for their future in Jerusalem. Their identity seemed to serve as a distinct asset in this. Armenia is often described in idealizing terms as homeland. Still, the majority do not wish to relocate there. Today the young people are more outgoing than the previous generations and they mix to some extent with other groups (mainly Palestinian Christians with whom they share many cultural customs). The Sts. Tarkmanchatz Armenian School offers education for children aged three up until 12 grade. On its website multiculturalism is said to be promoted through a diverse faculty and by teaching Armenian, Arabic, English, and Hebrew. The school is

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17 Dumper 2014:26
18 Andersson 2011:162, 239-240
19 www.ststarkmanchatz.org
administered by the brotherhood of St James. Thereby the clergy has substantial cultural influence in addition to their religious guardianship.

1.5.4. Patriarchy and religion
Traditional values of patriarchy appear to be reinforced by the religious environment. In addition a secular undercurrent perceivable in the community as well. Few come to church regularly and a majority only attend church during the main feasts. Yet those that for various reasons oppose religion or the church seem hesitant to take a public stand about it. A young man claims that many would not consider him Armenian any longer if he did. At feasts the lay men who attend church are notably fewer in number than the women. To not take part of church does not equate that there is no belief in a god or spirituality though. Utterances and bodily expressions with religious connotations, as to cross oneself when passing by a church, are practiced even by people who claim to not be religious. Research has shown that while those from religious families are further reinforced in their beliefs in a religious society, individuals from secular families are influenced as well (Kelley & De Graaf 1997, Gunner & Halvardsson 2006). This is attributed to the broad spectrum of important others, outside of the family sphere, which can be expected to provide religious influence.

Chapter 2 Research Review
In this chapter previous research relevant for this study will be presented. The symbiotic relationship between the lay community and the clergy, in connection to territory, is the focus of an extensive ethnological study in the Armenian Quarter. In an in-depth study among American-Armenians the influence of context on identity is highlighted. For those assimilated latter generations only symbolic expressions of ethnicity have prevailed. Although a couple of decades have passed since the two studies both contribute to an understanding of the context. While religion has been presumed to only be restrictive in many earlier sociological studies

20 Jose Casanova divides the concept of secularization into three strands — separation of "religious and other institutions", recession in "religious belief and practice", and "privatization of religion" (Berger 2012:315).
21 Falk 2016
more recent work has found that it can serve as a resource as well. Two studies among Muslim women shed light on this complexity. The first looks at the influence of ideology and religion on identity and agency. The second examines how gender, religion and ethnicity interact and form situational power. Although not all of the women in my study do necessarily practice religion on a daily basis, religion has prominence in their environment and in the history of their people. An intersectional approach proved useful in the latter study. This was also the case in four studies that examines the effects of the inclusion and exclusion of women.

2.1. The symbiotic composition of the Armenian Quarter

Victor Azarya’s analyses the symbiotic relationship between the two collectives within the monastery, the clergymen and the laity. As these groups normally constitute two opposites adaptations of different kinds must take place to make this arrangement work.23 The compound is likened to that of a defended neighborhood (Suttles 1972), although with many exceptions. The church service and the Gulbenkian library are the only public spaces within the quarter. "An outsider spotted in the courtyard has to be 'going somewhere'." In the defended neighborhood it is opposition rather than solidarity that nurtures unity. For the Armenians of Jerusalem it was first the threat of annihilation, and later that of assimilation, that strengthened a feeling of homogeneity. The conflicts between Christian denominations about the Holy places plays a part as well. Ever since the Ottoman Empire ethno-religious pluralism has been preserved in Jerusalem. First through the millet system, and later because of the unique international and interfaith status of Jerusalem. These circumstances further enforced division between the city’s different groups. Unlike many other local Christian the Armenians have not undergone "Arabization" and they try to stay out of the Arab-Israeli conflict.24 The mission to preserve a national and cultural identity is what unites the brotherhood of Saint James and the laity.25 The clergy is recruited from Armenia and other diasporas. Only celibate priests are accepted into the brotherhood. For all of the communal activities they take on the role of patrons, but keep their distance. The monks are the most challenged by the expansion

23 Azarya 1984:7, 188-189
24 Azarya 1984:171-179
25 Today the lay community has decreased, with between one fifth to half of the 1 500 people Azarya estimate to live within the monastery. The total number of Armenians in the Old city Azarya say to be fewer than 2 000. The clergy are estimated to about twenty and the seminarians to about fifty. Numbers that are almost unchanged. 2002:2, 6-7
of role-performances that emerges from having a majority of lay people live on their premises. Azarya identifies structural and symbolic means that have helped the brotherhood reclaim some of the seclusion that had to be abandoned after the influx of refugees. Absolute priority is given the custody of the holy places and "Divine service". Pastoral care for the local community remains secondary. Also, "by reinterpreting its educational and welfare functions not as a service to the local community but rather as contributions to the Armenia nation and culture as a whole".26

Azarya positions the Armenian quarter as a collective in between a formal organization and a residential community. The economic advantages combined with the cultural and social bonds are the main aspects that attaches the laity to the quarter. They strive to live a conventional life and focus on the needs of their own group. Religious feasts in combination with the historical setting "renews the link with the sacred and reasserts the deeper meaning of community ties… as well as greatly appreciated entertainment."27 Azarya’s conclusion is that the community is secular in its outlook. Gossip serves a means of social control. To ensure the separation to the clergy as well as observance of community norms.28 Two matters link the disparate groups together in a "search for meaning". The first is the history with the Armenian genocide and the complicated situation in Armenia.29 The second is the unique environment of Jerusalem where religion and ethnocultural pluralism is prominent.30 As an outcome of the historical circumstances, that initially caused this peculiar arrangement and setting, a unique community has developed. While the Jerusalemite group share many traits with other Armenian diasporas, they have not assimilated like elsewhere. Territoriality is perceived as a tool – "to ensure a sense of belonging and a distinctiveness to others".31

26 Azarya 1984:179-181
27 Ibid 1984:184-186
28 Ibid 1984:179
29 Armenia was still part of the Soviet Union during Azarya’s study and only gained its independence in 1991. Today matters as the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh appears to unite the concerns of the two groups. This was especially evident during the Four-Day War of April 2016. The Armenian genocide continues to be a focal matter even though there appear to be changes.
30 Azarya 1984:186
31 Ibid 1984:187-188
2.2. Armenian-Americans: From being to feeling Armenian

Anny Bakalian have conducted a descriptive in-depth study among Armenians in the United States. She observes how "Armenianess" is neither meaningful nor functional for those that are American-born, if not taught. Behind their assimilation lies social, economic and political conditions of the host society. It is mainly the symbolic expressions of ethnicity that prevails as these are not in conflict with the expectations of the mainstream society. In this the Genocide has prominence as every layer of society was affected. It forms "a symbol of collective Armenian identity" that transcends other differences. This is supported by Boyajian and Grigorian (1986) who concludes that this comes with a "feeling of being 'special'". Directly or indirectly attached to this is an obligation, not only towards one's family, but a whole people. Even the grandchildren of survivors share the responsibility to marry within the group. Attitudes and conduct often signals that "odars" (non-Armenians) are not welcome in the community. That those with mixed ancestry are less likely to attend ethnic gatherings could therefore have more to do with this attitude than with that one parent is "odar". The home is considered the women’s domain. Women are also said to have "a significant role in the ethnic maintenance". According to Avakian (1988) Armenian women are expected to live more traditionally than women in many other groups in the American society. Bakalian’s study shows how subsequent generations of Armenian descent go from "being ethnic" to manifesting their personal interpretations of what it means to be Armenian. This symbolic ethnicity is expressed with cultural accessories, rites of passage and ethnic food. They go from "being to feeling Armenian". Religious affiliation to the Armenian Apostolic church reinforces this ethnicity. Still, this does not necessarily mean that it has any significant impact on their actions or daily lives.

32 Through the means of an extensive mail questionnaire (584 respondents), in-depth interviews and participatory observations she explores how this minority, both individually and as a group, have negotiated ethnic identity and assimilation.
33 Bakalian 1993:9, 55, 63, 394
34 Ibid 1993:353-356
36 Ibid 1993:363
37 Ibid 1993:372-374
38 Ibid 1993:44-45
39 Ibid 1993:48, 356
2.3. Two studies about religious women in minority situations

Islamologist Eli Göndör has used theories about transition (Alain Touraine) and sociotopes (Lars Decik) to examine how the daily movements between different cultural contexts have contributed to increased religious identification in Muslim Arab women in Israel.\(^{40}\) He establishes that the identification as Muslims becomes a resource for the women. It helps them make the mental transition, from being a marginalized or underprivileged minority to being part of a majority (globally there are more Muslims than Jews). Furthermore, that religious affiliation does not require an allegiance to a state. This is considered an advantage, as to be citizens in a Jewish state is not an uncomplicated matter for women who can also be considered Palestinian.\(^{41}\)

The complexity of identity also becomes apparent in ethnologist Pia Karlsson Minganti study about agency among religious Muslim women in Sweden.\(^{42}\) With an intersectional approach it becomes evident how categories as woman, Muslim and Muslim culture are not fixed but constantly negotiated. This is something I intend to return to later. Situational power relationships take form, through the interaction between gender, religion, and ethnicity. These in turn are linked to societal structures, individual acts and institutions. While many researchers have argued that religion is a choice, and therefore not influential in the same way as gender or ethnicity, Karlsson Minganti sides with Erica Appelros who points out that this is entirely dependent on the context. In many parts of the world religion is a non-negotiable component of communal life. Karlsson Minganti adds that “[i]t informs the individuals early socialization and the shaping of the concept of self and identity, in an interplay with other aspects as gender and ‘race’/ethnicity”. In addition she also uses generation, age and class, to analyses how the women negotiate their identity in a minority situation.\(^{43}\) Her conclusion is that as these women strive to represent Islam together with others – to be subjects with agency – the interests of the minority group is given precedence over their interests as individuals and as women. On the one hand religion is a resource for them. Yet it is also something that can be

\(^{40}\) Göndör 2012:10
\(^{41}\) Ibid 2012:182-185
\(^{42}\) The four-year-long ethnographic study among ten young women took place in different parts of Sweden and partly abroad.
\(^{43}\) Karlsson Minganti 2007:12-17, 21-25, 34
viewed as restrictive. Their goal for agency was not freedom, but submission, under God and the traditions.\(^{44}\)

### 2.4 An intersectional approach in gender studies

The fruitfulness of an intersectional approach in research is also evident in a publication by International IDEA\(^ {45}\). In four case studies it is explored how inclusion and exclusion of women affect the development and practice of democracy. The research strategy includes to identify constraints and opportunities women of marginalized communities face in a context of (post-) conflict. The intersectional approach emphasizes how power dynamics, related to inclusion and exclusion, influence the different categories that inform an identity. Class, religion and ethnicity are examined next to gender.\(^ {46}\) Dr. Anna Larsson found that age and ethnicity were factors which proved to influence agency in an Afghan context of conflict and peacebuilding. In the three other studies it was indicated that choices, to participate in war efforts, were informed by nationalist identity and rifts caused by politics of ethnic and religious character.\(^ {47}\) A main role for women in traditional societies has often been what Sara Brown describes “as primary gatekeepers of the home and the transmitters of culture to the next generation”. This is consistent with claims by Shahnazarian and Ziemer. Their intersectional study found that “the only female life-strategies that are approved and promoted [in Armenian culture] are those which include the creation of a ‘complete’ family, marked by the presence of husband and children”.\(^ {48}\) Therefore an important task for research to identify other roles as well.\(^ {49}\)

\(^{44}\) Ibid 2007:14-17, 280-283

\(^{45}\) The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance

\(^{46}\) Hedström & Senarathna 2015:12

\(^{47}\) Ibid 2015:13, 17

\(^{48}\) Shahnazarian and Ziemer 2014:29

\(^{49}\) Hedström & Senarathna 2015:21
Chapter 3 Theory & Concepts

This chapter presents the theories and concepts that guide the research design, analyses and discussion of the empirical material. The research design is presented in 3.6 Approach.

3.1. Discourse theory

As stated Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s Discourse theory, as presented by Marianne Jørgensen & Louise J. Phillips in Discourse analysis as Theory and Method (2002), is an comprehensive theory and methodology that I will only deploy in part (the methodology is discussed in chapter 3). The ontological and epistemological understanding is that reality is contingent and knowledge situated. It is the rules and expectations that guide social interaction that forms discourse. Discourse is understood as constitutive as it permeates all social interaction, and it also includes entities as social institutions. The social actions derive their meaning in relation to other actions, just like the meaning of words from their relationship to other words. Keywords, so called key signifiers, produce discourse through chains of equivalence. When a discourse is perceived as normative, it is a hegemonic discourse. Discourse theory is therefore an excellent resource to investigate how abstract discourses provide behavioral instructions and restrain individual agency. Also, in order to discern challenges to norms and tradition through discursive struggles.50 According to Laclau and Mouffe both individual and collective identities are understood as the outcome of discursive processes or struggles. Within each discourse there are designated positions for people to hold as a subject. With these ”subject positions” come certain behavioral expectations that are learned through socialization. It is from childhood onwards the individual learns and internalizes different norms, customs and roles. Yet there are always several conflicting discourses in progress. So there are various identities that will be negotiated, accepted or refused, on a subconscious level. A woman can be a wife, a mother and a daughter within the family discourse. In the workplace she has other identities to relate to. The subject thereby holds a fragmented and overdetermined identity. The collective identity also forms along the same pattern of ”reduction of possibilities”. Through categorization the differences

50 Jørgensen & Phillips 2002:6-7, 19-21, 35-36, 38, 43, 46, 176-177, 185-186
within the group are concealed. Also, with ”the logic of equivalence” comes ”the logic of difference” and the other/s take form.\textsuperscript{51}

The theory has received critique for not taking the constraints inherent in structure seriously, as it stresses the possibilities that arise from contingency (Chouliaraki 2002, Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999). Jørgensen and Phillips do agree with the critique in part but also assert that Discourse theory recognizes that not all actors have equal possibilities.\textsuperscript{52} How the methodology will be implemented is explained in more detail in 3.6 Approach.

3.2. Four concepts of agency

Feminist thought offers various positions regarding studies on women and agency. Kelsey C. Burke stresses the importance to focus on women's agency so that women are not reduced to solely being acted upon. She also promotes this approach for research on women within gender-traditional religions. In these environments women tend to be identified as nurturing and passive while men are perceived as leaders with strong work ethics. The group is often given prominence. Burke therefore suggests a broadened concept of agency that does not demand ”a secular and western assumption about individual desire for liberation and freedom”.

The four approaches; Resistance, Empowerment, Instrumental, Compliant, draw inspiration from Orit Avishai (2008). The first three illustrate how individuals act on behalf of themselves through attempts to change or challenge by resistance, reinterpret in order to feel empowered, or use religious practice for ”non-religious outcomes”. Compliance acknowledges pursuit on behalf of God, or the ways in which women conform to the religious teaching.\textsuperscript{53} In Agency and Structure theory (Giddens 1984) the individual is perceived as a ”reflective agent” that stands in duality to society, or the structure. Through reflexivity individuals position themselves and become co-present within the social system of a society. Anthony Giddens was the first to argue that structures can be both enabling and constraining.\textsuperscript{54} A claim that has not lacked opposition.\textsuperscript{55} The critique is similar to that of Discourse theory.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid 2002:30, 34, 38, 40-44
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid 2002:33-34, 54-56
\textsuperscript{53} K.C Burke 2017:122-125, 129
\textsuperscript{54} Giddens 1984:162-165, 168, 173-174, 185
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid 1984:69, Winell 2016:63-64
3.3. Intersectionality

Intersectional theory has been consulted as well because of the critique of aforementioned theories. Its strength lies in how it pinpoints the need of thorough reflections on axis of power and their influence on identities and agency.\textsuperscript{56} Identities are perceived as culturally complex and furthermore deeply embedded in the power dynamics of structures. What Discourse theory describes as an ‘fragmented and overdetermined identity’ is coherent with this. Nina Lykke argues that an intersectional approach is strategically important for analyses in patriarchal contexts. Even though the gender aspect generally is assumed to be a determinant factor, it does not have to be that per se. The researcher needs to thoroughly reflect on which axis of power to include and exclude.\textsuperscript{57} The roots of intersectionality lie in feminist and political thought that envision a society that provides democratic, productive and non-exclusionary ways for cultural complexity.\textsuperscript{58}

3.4. Summary of theory

The theories and concepts described above serve as a lens through which certain things are highlighted, while other perspectives inevitably might be overlooked.\textsuperscript{59} The ontological understanding here, based on the perception and interactions of humans, frames the social milieu as contingent. Hence, the epistemological understanding is that knowledge is situated. Still, when critical theory is used social science moves beyond a strictly descriptive endeavor.\textsuperscript{60} In the critique of something there is claim on something to be good or bad (perhaps even true or false). This holds a non-contingent element.\textsuperscript{61}

The accompanying methodology of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s Discourse theory provides a tool to discern how discourses about outlook, identities and social space are perceived, contested and enacted.\textsuperscript{62} All in order to learn about the agency of the Armenian women. To help highlight how the women position themselves in relation to religion and tradition four approaches are applied, namely; resistance, empowerment, instrumental and

\textsuperscript{56} Lykke 2005:13, 2011
\textsuperscript{57} Lykke 2003:53
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid 2003:52-53
\textsuperscript{59} Malterud 2014:104-105
\textsuperscript{60} Jørgensen & Phillips 2002:2
\textsuperscript{61} Giddens 1984:339
\textsuperscript{62} Jørgensen & Phillips 2002:19-21, 35-36, 38, 43, 46, 176-177, 185-186
compliant. Furthermore, this intends to give recognition to the possibility of a variety of ways to exercise agency.\textsuperscript{63} In accordance with this and Anthony Giddens theory of agency and structure this study argues that social systems can enable individual agency.\textsuperscript{64} They are not solely restrictive.

Still, because of the power dynamics of inclusion and exclusion prevalent in every society an intersectional approach is implemented. Gender, age and ethnicity will be focused on in the study. Religion as well. While religion rightly can be questioned if to hold the same position as the rest in a secular society this is not the case in Jerusalem. In the Armenian quarter religion is ever present. Ethnicity has historically been very important for Armenians.\textsuperscript{65} Age is included because the previous study among youth indicated differences in attitudes and behavior compared to the older generations.\textsuperscript{66} Gender is here assumed to influence agency. According to UN SDG Goal 5 education, profession and marriage are connected to gender equality. Thus these are added to the analyses as well. In order to keep the research more focused class will not be a specific category. Reflections in the analyses on power structures is believed to be sufficient.

3.5. Approach

Because of the different parameters involved in a field study I decided to collect the material part time during two months in the spring 2017. First of all, time is required to build trust. Even more so with conflict present in the surrounding context.\textsuperscript{67} Secondly, to transcribe and analyse the semi-structured interviews can be demanding.\textsuperscript{68} In order to find suitable participants “the snowball method” was partly used.\textsuperscript{69} It is a network based procedure, where not only local contacts but also the first interviewees connected me with others. As the community is small some connections between respondents could be expected nevertheless. A challenge that also arose out of this, is how to secure the anonymity of the interviewees in the report. While no one declined my wish to record the interviews, at least once a subject had to be discussed off

\textsuperscript{63} K. C. Burke 2017:122-124
\textsuperscript{64} Giddens 1984:162-165, 168, 173-174, 185
\textsuperscript{65} Azarya 1984:171-179
\textsuperscript{66} Falk 2016:24
\textsuperscript{67} Cole 1997:15
\textsuperscript{68} Jorgensen & Phillips 2002:120
\textsuperscript{69} Bryman 2011:434
the record. The semi-structured interview questions are attached in the appendix. Observations and participatory observations in the community have informed the study. Also relevant dissertations and scientific journals on DiVA portal, Google scholar and Academia. News articles in local papers like Haaretz as well. In addition to material about Armenian women in diaspora, research on women's agency, agency in religion and intersectionality, was consulted. Several complementary theories have been applied in order to try to answer the research question. After the material had been collected I changed school which delayed the completion of the thesis. 

The study is not claiming to offer a generalizable material. Only statements given by the women in a particular interview situation was analysed. Twelve women, not ten, were interviewed in the end because of a group interview. The participants were orally briefed about the purpose of my study. Most of the interviews took about one hour. All interviews except one were recorded on my phone. The exception was an ad hoc interview at an Armenian dinner like event. As I ended up next to a woman who was interested in my project and also fit the profile for my target group we decided to let our conversation turn into an interview. Afterwards I wrote down the relevant details. Naturally it is of uttermost concern to not distort any of the shared information.

### 3.5.1. The use of Discourse theory

Laclau och Mouffe’s Discourse theory, as presented by Jørgensen & Phillips (2002), provides three main concepts – discourses, identities and social space – for the analysis. These concepts discursively organize keywords, so called key signifiers. So the first phase of the analysis involves to identify key signifiers connected to the three different concepts. These are in turn defined by different words which bring them meaning. The words as signs define what the key signifiers are through chains of equivalence. In the example below the key signifiers ‘Armenian religion’, ‘Armenian woman’ and ‘the Armenian quarter’ are included. As these can also be viewed as discourses the theory’s concept ‘discourse’ is renamed. To avoid misunderstanding it will be called ‘outlook’. ‘Outlook’ represents that which does not fall under the concepts ‘identity’ or ‘social space’. For example; existential, ideological and

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70 Ibid 2011:28, 415  
71 In the autumn of 2017 I transferred from Stockholm School of Theology to Uppsala University to enroll to the Master program ‘Religion in Peace and Conflict’.  
72 Malterud 2014:240
political discourse. While exploring how key signifiers are invested with meaning through chains of equivalence, it is also important to look for what they are perceived not to be. What does it mean if 'Armenian man’ is categorized with 'provider’, within the concept of identity, when contrasted with 'Armenian woman’ as in the example below? This can be assumed to affect the agency of both in relation to the social space of 'home’ and 'public space’.

Processes of group formation and representation are also part of the identity concept as "[i]t is not until someone speaks of, or to, or on behalf of, a group that it is constituted as a group”.

**Figure 1. Example of how a discourse is formed as key signifiers gain meaning through chains of equivalence. This is also how "the other” is formed.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concepts:</th>
<th>Key signifiers:</th>
<th>Signs that form chains of equivalence:</th>
<th>⇨&quot;The other&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identity:</td>
<td>'An Armenian woman’</td>
<td>‘mother’+‘maker of the home’+‘hardworking’</td>
<td>⇨’An Armenian man’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outlook:</td>
<td>'Armenian religion’</td>
<td>'Armenian Apostolic faith’+‘church’+‘priests’</td>
<td>⇨’Judaism’ ⇨’Islam’ ⇨’Christianity’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social space:</td>
<td>'The Armenian quarter’</td>
<td>’sacred’+’home’</td>
<td>⇨’Jerusalem (at large)”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discourses that are viewed as objective are *hegemonic discourses*. When these are contested through a collision of discrepant discourses change might occur. The discourse analyses aims to reveal these conflicts. A social space like 'the Armenian quarter’ is bound to carry many meanings as it both dominated by a monastery and a residential compound. It can simultaneously be perceived as 'sacred’ and 'home’. The needs of the different groups there contributes to *discursive struggles* at times. Ultimately discourse is often fluid. Which signs will define the key signifier will vary. The aim of this study is to analyse how the women are positioned and interact within the structure of discourses – outlook, identity and social space – in order to establish room for agency.

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73 Jørgensen & Phillips 2002:43-45, 47-48, 50-51, 55
74 Ibid 2002:6-7
Chapter 4 Methodology and Material

In this chapter the methodology will be described together with reflections on ethics and validity. An overview of the material will also be presented.

4.1. Methodology

Due to the special characteristics of the context it qualifies as a unique case study. It is believed to be of scientific interest in its own right. In line with customary proceedings for a case study an inductive approach is used. That is, the initial step of the research process is dedicated to gather material through semi-structured interviews and observations. Ten interviews appeared as realistic within the time frame. A much larger number is often suggested to ensure validity. Yet, it is worth noticing that according to Bryman theoretical saturation of data was achieved at only twelve participants in a very large study in a homogenous context. Laclau and Mouffe’s Discourse theory provide the methodology as well. Even though several theories are combined they share a basic outlook on reality and knowledge. See chapter 3 for more detailed discussion on theory and approach.

4.1.1. Ethics

There are plenty of ethical considerations to make in research. Önver Cetrez and Valerie DeMarinis point to the ethical demands and the need for sensitivity in research among vulnerable populations. Although the participants in the study are not especially vulnerable as individuals there are circumstances in the context and its surrounding that are sensitive. A clarification that the study was not pushing for a specific political agenda had to be made. It was also stressed that they do not have to answer any questions they feel uncomfortable with. Although I as a researcher was sincere in my assurance to the women that my intention was not political, as in not expecting them to express their political views or how they stand in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, this can be questioned from another standpoint. Molly Andrews has addressed this with the claim that “the personal is political, and the political is personal”.

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75 Bryman 2011:74-77
76 Ibid2011:392-395, 436
77 Cetrez & DeMarinis 2017:235-236, 253
78 Andrews 2007:2
Both with discourse theory and the intersectional approach comes an understanding of identity and structure as informed by politics.\(^7^9\) Furthermore, I as a researcher will inevitably influence the research through selection, interpretation and narration of the report.\(^8^0\) Just like theory is not neutral, neither am I as a researcher. Me as a middle aged, academic woman from Sweden – the world's most secularized and non-traditional country\(^8^1\) – cannot presume that a secular individualistic society provides a template for the research. The periods I have spent in the Armenian quarter have therefore been crucial for a better understanding of the context. The accuracy and credibility of the research are also linked to this.\(^8^2\)

### 4.1.2. Validity

How to ensure validity of a unique case study poses somewhat of a challenge as generalization and replicability, that are central for most research, won’t apply.\(^8^3\) To outbalance this Alvesson and Sköldberg underline the need to be well prepared, allow for plurality with several theoretical perspectives, and also use theory that help highlight marginalized voices.\(^8^4\) The application of an intersectional approach is such a measure. Another important step is to address the findings in a manner that aim to prevent the reproduction of discriminatory power relations. In line with this is to reflect upon dominant views within the research community.\(^8^5\) Important is also the consistency of the report, together with reflexivity and intersubjectivity. Malterud advocates this as a communicative concept of validity (Kvale 1994). The research process, and not only the results, need to be accounted for in a readable manner for the intended audience to understand.\(^8^6\)

\(^7^9\) Cho, Crenshaw, McCall 2013, Jørgensen & Phillips 2002:34, 44
\(^8^0\) Hjelm 2011:144-145
\(^8^1\) World Value Survey 2010-2014 by Inglehart et al.
\(^8^2\) Johnson 2011:66-67, 91-92
\(^8^3\) Bryman 2011:77-78
\(^8^4\) Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:451
\(^8^5\) Alvesson and Sköldberg 2009:161-162, Hill Collins 2015:14
\(^8^6\) Malterud 2014:177-179, 222
4.2. Material

Below is a short presentation of the interviewed women. In order to protect the anonymity the details are not precise. To be single can include to never have married nor been in a romantic relationship, to have had serious relationships but never gotten married, or to be divorced. Six women are mothers. A majority is born in Jerusalem and they all live in the Armenian quarter. A couple of women were born in other cities, but their families escaped to the quarter when war approached. Most of them work or study. A housewife sometimes work part time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informant</th>
<th>Age-group</th>
<th>Civil Status</th>
<th>Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lusine</td>
<td>40-45</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Nr1. 10.05.2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carog</td>
<td>55-60</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Nr2. 18.05.2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anahid</td>
<td>60-65</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Nr3.18.05.2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arpi</td>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Nr4. 23.05.2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beatriz</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Nr5. 25.05.2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flora</td>
<td>35-40</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Nr6. 28.05.2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kohar</td>
<td>40-45</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Nr6. 28.05.2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>50-55</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Nr6. 28.05.2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karin</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Nr7. 28.05.2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berjougih</td>
<td>55-60</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Nr8. 29.05 + 02.06.2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sirarpi</td>
<td>50-55</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Nr9. 02.06.2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arousiag</td>
<td>55-60</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Nr10. 02.06.2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5 The Interviews and Observations

In this chapter selected material from the interviews and the observations will be presented. The analysis questions, together with Discourse theory, has guided the selection and categorization into themes. These themes have served as analytical tools to learn more about the agency of women in the Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem. References to each interview of concern are found in parentheses. Pseudonym is used when quotes are presented. See 4.2. for full list of pseudonyms, age-groups and dates of the interviews.

5.1. Identity

Through the first analysis question "How do the women relate to gender, ethnicity and age?" the concept of ‘identity’ is explored.

5.1.1. Gender – Anarmenian woman

What can be perceived as an essentialist view on gender and identity is expressed in half of the interviews (5, 6, 7, 8, 10). Still, there are variations on how they and the other women reflect and relate to gender.

5.1.1.1. Home and motherhood

An Armenian woman seems to be closely connected with the home and motherhood. This is reoccurring when generalizations are made (6, 8, 9). Other times it is implicit, as when mentioning what defines a respectable woman. Arousiag illustrates what was her mother’s way of thinking, ”I have my family, I have my children, I have my friends, I have my neighborhood” (10). It is also inherent in the description of how the main dream for female friends was to get married (9). At times with opposition to this ideal (2, 4, 7).

Through the interviews it becomes apparent that women most often do the cooking and cleaning. The responsibility to take care of kids is mainly on the woman. A custom that has prevailed although many women today work at least part time. This “supermom” that Berjougi calls her, is hardworking. According to those that are mothers, they are the first out

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87 Jørgensen & Phillips 2002:50
of bed in the morning and the last to go to sleep. More than half of them mention this with pride. For Flora “number one is my family, my home, [for] my children to be good, to be well, to be healthy… I'm trying my best and I hope, this what I do, will not go under in vain.” Even though Anahid is the oldest of the interviewees, she has continued to work part time. Besides work she takes care of her husband, the home, gives support to their grandchildren and also helps out in the community. All women except the youngest mention aiding relatives (1, 2, 6, 8, 9, 10). Anahid finds great joy in caring for others. Yet several times she matter-of-factly states that life is not easy and therefore it is crucial for her (as a woman) to stay strong.

5.1.1.2. Hardworking and strong

To be hardworking is mentioned in several interviews (6, 7, 8, 9). Strong is an adjacent term that while not synonymous can be related at times. Three of the four women that mention strength are unmarried and use the term in relation to themselves (2, 3, 4, 10). All interviewees except for Karin expressed particular struggles women experience because of gender. Carog says that while women have to struggle more than men all around the world, it is especially difficult in Jerusalem. This is attributed to a “Middle Eastern mentality”. We meet at Carog’s business location. Her mother sits next to us helping out with some handiwork. “God bless her, my mama, took care of everybody. But I grew up in a mans world, you know. I never felt that I was protected by my brothers.” While thankful for her many good friends, both female and male, she says they could not provide sufficient protection. When she tried to set up her own business, she as an unmarried woman, experienced vicious bullying from the landlord and the businessman next door. It got so bad she fell ill from the ongoing harassment. “[T]he reason they treat women like that is because they have other intentions”. She compares her contract with the deal the landlord made with a man some years prior to her moving in. The discrimination against her is apparent and shocking. She claims he tried to push her to oblige to his ulterior motives. Part of the blame are, according to her, the women, ”sluts” who have used sexual favors to achieve their goals. “It's not a matter of being a conservative person vis a vis a person who is very open minded”. Her voice is firm, “If I want to do something I do it for my enjoyment, but I don't do it because I want to get something from a person.” Another option would have been to bribe the men, but she could not afford it.
5.1.3. Opposite views on gender equality

Arpi explains that while some things have changed others have not. “In our community boys and girls can go out and smoke and drink and have parties and come back late. Both can do that. The difference is, still, if a boy sleeps around he’s considered an amazing hero. And if a girl does, she's a whore.” Arpi is considered “a strong woman”. There are even youth that come up to her and express their admiration. ”I don't know if I'm a strong woman. I'm a strong human being”. She has a slightly different approach to identity than the rest of the women. She says that she would rather be defined by her humanity than her gender. By standing up for her rights to be herself she has made an impact. Her male friends show her more respect. ”They talk to you differently, they refer to you differently”. The change she has seen so far has only been in an acceptance of her crossing boundaries for what is perceived to be the custom behavior. Other women around her do not enjoy that same privilege. She states that to be a woman comes with limitations everywhere, including her community. ”There is difference from family to family as well, but it still depends on how much the man allows”. She finds it interesting how women tend to put their sons in more privileged positions than the girls. The girls are expected to help out at home from the very start. Arpi adds that, although she considers herself an aware person regarding these issues, her upbringing might affect her to make the same mistake. While struggles related to gender are mentioned in several interviews, Karin does not think that there are any particular limitations for women. In reference to the feminism she has encountered at an Israeli University she gets a bit agitated and exclaims ”I totally disagree with them”. While she recognizes that there has been a battle historically to achieve equality, she has ”never felt like less of a person because I’m a woman”. After a while she adds, ”maybe I am lucky and I just live in a good place and at a good time.” She further elaborates on how possibilities are connected to the society a woman lives in.

5.1.2. Armenian men

Some believe that Armenian men generally are more trustworthy than men in the surrounding cultures (5, 6). In the interview with the trio it is assured that while women take more responsibility when it comes to the care and education of the children this does not mean that the men are indifferent (6). Armenian men are hard workers and family oriented according to them. Emma adds that they are furthermore “loyal unlike most other men”. Kohar and Flora do not comment on this but do not object this dichotomy. According to Emma it is common in
the surrounding cultures that a man has a mistress. When Sirarpi mentions how her husband is a really good and righteous man, she adds that after living in Jerusalem this long he of course "has adapted [a] very male chauvinist approach to family". For her it is not a problem though as "even biblically the house head is the father". During my interview with Lusine I spend a couple of hours with her and her husband (1). Several times she disappears into the kitchen to get us refreshments, or answers calls from the children and her mother. Her husband and I relax in the sitting room, while we discuss Armenian culture and life in Jerusalem. Yet the husband insists that the culture is not patriarchal. His arguments are in comparison to the surrounding Arabic culture. Lusine inserts at one point that he is much more interesting than her. That it would have been better to interview him.

5.1.3. The patriarchal family and the generations
Family remains at the center of this patriarchal environment. Heritage is related solely from the paternal side on several occasions (5, 9, 10). Arousiag says that with the Armenians, as all the surrounding cultures except the Jewish, it is the man who represents the family and the family name. A person is the child of "Mr. So and so." When I ask for a recount of something related to Sirarpi maternal family she very quickly falls back talking about her father’s lineage (9). Anahid recalls how when growing up they did not have material excess, but lived in happiness (3). “Love, this is the value we took, the heritage of our family, my father”. Kohar recounts how her husband still obeys his father. If the dad calls in the morning ”’ok baba, five minutes, I’ll be there’… He can cancel any program of the day”. Kohar and Flora try to teach their children to behave in the same manner (6). It is not all successful. Many claim that the younger generations do not adhere with the same obedience and respect towards tradition and older people (1, 4, 2, 6, 10). A couple of women partly attribute this to social media (1, 4). The extended family, with parents, siblings and children, is often close-knit. Many live together or close by. It is common that children live with their parents until they get married. Elderly people are often tended to by daughters. All interviewees, except the youngest (4, 5, 7), live with or have supported elderly relatives in some way.

5.1.4. Ethnicity – Armenian
All women present themselves as Armenians. There is great pride in this. Yet only a few dream of moving to Armenia (1, 6, 8). Sirarpi explains that although their community is small it is
very wealthy – in heritage, culture, traditions, and the way they ’stand their ground’ (9). Similar arguments are brought up in other interviews (6, 10). Sirarpi’s dream is that all her children would be of help to the community. Although their father is not Armenian the children are proud to carry the Armenian culture and heritage. She talks about the Armenian genocide. While it is only discussed in one more interview (10) it is mentioned in three others (1, 5, 6). That is when referring to ancestors, or Armenians in general, as survivors. Arousiag insists that Armenia is more peaceful than other countries (10). Although she finds other cultures important, and do take interest in them as well, she describes the Armenian culture as outstanding to the rest. This is a notion shared by others as well (5, 6). Beatriz says she loved everything about Armenia – the nature, air and architecture. Kohar mentions nature as well. She visited Armenia for the first time only recently but would love to return every year. When Flora told her husband that she wants to move to Armenia, when they have retired and the kids can manage on their own, he asked why. She exclaims ”I want to see green trees. I want to see nature’…When I open my window I see only the walls. I'm sick of these walls.” Berjouigh exclaims “ the place where I breath is Armenia” (8). She cannot relocate at the moment though because of family commitment. Lusine wants to move “because I'd love to be in a Christian country, where everybody is Armenian” (1). Another reason is that she and her husband believe that their children would be safer there. It would also prevent their kids from losing their Armenian identity or ending up marrying someone from another religion.

5.1.4.1. A Jerusalemite Armenian

A majority of the women mix Arabic with the Armenian. Sometimes other languages as well. Some of the women have their roots in the region since many generations (Armenian kaghatkatzi) (3, 5, 6, 10). They commonly use Arabic at home. Anahid answers that she prays in Armenian when she goes to Church, but when she talks to God by her own it is in Arabic. The challenge to keep the distinct Armenian characteristics of their community is brought up by some (6, 9). Kohar explains that to live “between the Jews and Arabs… there are also challenges to keep this faith. To keep the culture. To keep the language”. She tells her children that "the Armenians they are like this, we do it like this. Keep it". Still, a bond with the Palestinians is expressed by many (2, 3, 4, 7, 10). They live close to each other and share cultural features. Arousiag calls herself Palestinian-Armenian. Others like Carog and Arpi use the identification a Jerusalemite Armenian. This is also perceptible in the reasoning of Arousiag
and Berjougih.

Arpi stresses the importance to also learn about the surrounding cultures. They are all related to each other in being a part of this multicultural city. "Today you're not only an Armenian, you're a Jerusalemite Armenian. That's a thing of its own…" she states with emphasis. Arpi claims being Armenian should not mean, that you cannot benefit from other cultures. "[I]t's ok to be part of the other communities. Integrate." Because of a major identity crises, in her late teens, she wants to invest in the youth. The hope is that they do not have to go through the same thing as her. She sees a need for freedom and to be able to question things. At the same time, the older generation needs to progress beyond "the autopilot mode" for what it means to be an Armenian. Arpi explains what she experiences as an even larger problem in the community. "So, if they're telling you, for you to be the best version of yourself you have to be an Armenian and a Christian, with all the love that I have towards it and all of my strength coming from it, my root, I don't think that is how you should get to your roots." She calls for teaching the Armenian language and culture, while acknowledging that there are numerous ways to be and to do things. Her hope is that there is a change coming with the youth, partially due to social media.

5.1.4.2. "The others" – Arabs and Jews

The comparison to other groups comes naturally in many discussions about the life of the Armenians. A couple of women establish, with or without frustration, that the other groups seem unaware about the distinct identity of the Armenians (1, 2, 7). Karin and Carog are well accustomed to both the Arabic and Jewish cultures (2, 7). Carog feels lucky to have been introduced to different cultures early on. She grew up with both Armenian and Arab friends as she did not attend the Armenian school. After University she ended up working with Israeli Jews, which taught her a lot about their way of life. There were some minor things she perceived as challenging due to differences in culture. This is because on the one hand, the Armenians are supposedly more open minded than the local Arabs, but on the other hand they are somewhat conservative compared to many Jews. All of the women consider Armenians as more emancipated compared to most other groups which are represented in Jerusalem. The exception being the mainstream liberal Jewish society. To follow their example is not desirable by a majority. The bond to the Jewish community is weaker in general. If there is any connection, beyond that with the authorities, it is usually through higher studies and work. Arpi
would like to see a bigger change in her community regarding gender issues and views on homosexuality. This is the only area where she thinks the Armenians have not progressed beyond the Jewish society. Especially the Palestinian Muslim women are said to be very restricted by conventions. A couple of women argue that when women have been given a secondary status in Armenian contexts it has been because of adaptations to the surrounding culture. Not as part of the Armenian culture itself (8, 10).

5.2. Outlook
The second analysis question “What are the women’s views on education, marriage, career and religion?” guided the exploration of the women’s ‘outlook’.

5.2.1. Education
The significance of education comes across in all interviews. At least six of the women have studied or studies at University (2, 4, 6, 7, 8). All have completed senior high school, and many have accomplished other educations as well. Anahid earned her degree by working for many years. Arousiaig claims that Armenians are always highly educated. That they have rebuilt themselves as a people many times. ”We care for our education, we care for our nation, we care for our people.” Berjougih is highly educated. She quotes an Armenian saying, ”give me educated women [and] I will give you [a] wonderful nation”. According to her, Armenian school teachers are mostly women because of this. Later when we talk about her struggles in the community a slightly different picture emerges. Gender is said to have brought impediments to her career. Kohar laughs as she recalls how her husband did have some regrets that he agreed on her studying. She studied for a higher degree while working and taking care of her family. It did take longer than she initially had planned. Carog has studied abroad. She explains how language can restrict the Armenians that do not have Hebrew or Arabic as their first language. Adequate linguistic knowledge is key to manage studies at University. When she has retired she would love to study more. Lusine and her husband want their children to pursue their dreams. University is a must though. The husband insists that anyone who learns Hebrew well and strives can succeed. When it comes to the homework of their oldest he helps out as well. Karin reflects on how her drive and love for learning was implemented at home. She speaks several languages and knows both Arabic and Hebrew fluently. Her mother joins the conversation and says that she and her husband do not
think like the other people in the community. For them it is important that their children get a degree before they get married. As the daughter now has her degree and is married the mother thinks she ought to embrace family life fully, and work, instead of studying so much. Karin gets a bit annoyed by the comment. She explains that she really loves her academic studies and her husband encourages her to pursue her dreams.

For many in the community, but not all, it is important to send their children to the Armenian school. A majority of the interviewees went to St Tarkmanchatz Armenian school. Reasons mentioned for not attending could be because of a conflict or that another school seems like a better choice. The women are very active in supporting their children (6, 9), young relatives (10) or grandchildren (3), with homework. Achievements of young family members are mentioned in half of the interviews (1, 3, 6, 9, 10). Kohar and Flora say that they push their children to get high grades so that they will be able to attend University. Many young people from the community are said to have studied in Armenia. If Kohar’s children want to study abroad it would be the only option she would accept. They do not have relatives in Europe and “Armenia is your nation, your home”. Sirarpi is very determined in how she raises her children “I do want my children to prosper and be somebody”. She talks about the heritage from her grandfather and father. That the children go to the Armenian school just as she did is important.

Most of the teachers are Armenians from the community. “The school has got a big, big, huge impact on the children...they bring up those emotions of love for the country, love for the language, love for the songs, and if you don't send your kids here they're not gonna have that. That's the bottom line. They will still feel Armenian, but not as when you send them here”.

When Arpi talks about how the Armenian school functions she exclaims ”stop occupying the brain”. She feels it is like a machine that communicates "if you’re not nothing... but Armenian, then you're not gonna be Armenian”. She says it is similar to how Prime minister “Bibi” Netanyahu scares people that “if you're not an nationalist Israeli, then all the Arabs are going to kill you”. She compares an occasion when she brought visitors to see the children in the Armenian school to visit in Palestinian refugee camps. The children in the Armenian school were not interested in the visitors from the outside at all, while the Palestinian children on the other hand would interact and ask questions. It is the Church that is responsible, according to Arpi, as the brotherhood of St James run Sts Tarkmanchatz school.
5.2.2. Marriage

To get married appears as the norm in the community. Preferably with an Armenian. There are exceptions though. Karin and her mother explains that the last ten years the mixed marriages have increased because of the Armenian community’s small numbers. Many marry Arab Christians. In comparison to much of the surrounding cultures Armenians are considered to be more emancipated by all of the women. Karin always felt different from her Arab classmates and knew that their life was not for her. “90 percent of the girls who studied with me in school… they got married straight after school. They have like three kids now”. Out of the six respondents that are married three mention that they got married late (1, 7, 9). That is between 25-30 years of age. The reasons vary. In Karin’s family the parents were very firm on that none of their children were to marry before turning 25. First they would need an education. She also had other goals she wished to achieve first. Lusine does not mention any particular reason to why she got married late. She knew her husband since way back. For her to get married and start a family is very important. Sirarpi did not fret about getting married though. “I was very different, and all my friends told me that. I didn't have boyfriends as I grew up… I was content, whereas I looked at all of my friends – they wanted a boyfriend, and it was like a trauma… and I think *sigh’s 'your life is hell right now just trying to find one’. Why just not enjoy the moment…be happy you have a job… be happy you have the money to go and study”. A foreigner asked her to marry him and she promised to ‘pray over it’ as that is important for her as a ‘born-again believer’. In line with the tradition so was her father’s blessing. When she approached him, he answered "we don't have Armenian girls for foreigners". So she told the man to "find somebody else". After two years her father suddenly gave them his blessing. After that everything proceeded fast. They became a couple only one week before getting married so the community was taken by surprise. She says it was a leap of faith that worked out very well. In hindsight she believes she would probably have become a bit lonely if she had not gotten married and started a family. She finds it sad that there are not enough men in the community for all the women who would like to get married to find a match. Although she married a non-Armenian there are those that would not consider that.

Beatriz is single and longs for children, but it is important for her to find the right man first. She would prefer to marry an Armenian. While she has been on dates with Christian Palestinians it felt complicated because of culture. She believes it would be easier to marry someone from the community as most of them know each other. Maybe she suddenly will
consider someone she already knows in a new way. She leaves it up to God to solve how she can meet her match. Not all of her friends are married yet. According to her most of the Armenian marriages seem happy and the women pleased. She adds that it is different among the Arabs, as women are deemed as less than a man.

5.2.2.1. Singles and cultural change
All interviewed women are of what is considered a marriageable age or older. Half of the interviewees are single (2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10). Three of them would rather live with someone than get married (2, 4, 10). If they meet the right person that is. Arousiag says that people still talk about her not getting married. “Of course I had the chance. When I was eighteen I was in love”. She mentions how feelings can change if there is betrayal or if the family of the man ”does something”. She exclaims that of course every ”woman likes to have her own man.” Yet she believes that “if a woman has a strong character [like her] she doesn't need a man”. She would not want to be restricted by the obligation that comes from marriage. “Why should I need a man? For sex life? Well, maybe my body needs that, but… I never tried it, I don't need it.” For her it is important to be able to travel. This would not be possible if she was married because “once you are married you have to show [that] you respect your husband.” She laughingly asserts that she would be divorced the second day. According to her the respect for the woman disappears with marriage. ”When I see these poor ladies that are married. They have problems.” According to her a woman who marries has to quit her work ”to take care of the children, all the education, the cooking, cleaning the house… in a way she is a private nanny for her husband.” Next to being good, wise and clever the wife must be ”loveable… especially when it comes to sex, that is very important, if you don't show that love to your husband…he will start playing around.” She says that she could consider to live with a man without getting married if she would meet the right one. According to her there has been a cultural change and it is not as important as it used to be to get married.

Cultural changes are mentioned by several women (1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 10). There are mixed feelings about this. The tradition, that you should marry before living together and having children, appears prevalent despite exceptions. Carog had several possibilities to get married during her lifetime. Although she has been very fond of some men, she could never consider to marry them. Yet, if she meets the right man she could consider to live with him. Carog recounts how it was when she was about 16-17 years old. Families would come to her parents with marriage
proposals. She "used to sit and cry - 'oh mom or dad, what?, are you fed up with me? Want to just marry me off". She could not imagine to marry for life, as was the tradition up until maybe twenty years ago. "[B]eing a strong woman, I never had the courage to embark on something like that. I didn't want someone who is weaker than me, and at the same time I didn't want a bully… I didn't want someone to tell me what to do, where to go, not to go. These are things, you know, you grow up seeing, and you don't want to repeat them in your life." This makes her worry a bit for her young female relatives as well.

Berjougih says that "if I was married I'm sure I was going to be a very, I wouldn't say the obedient, we are not the slaves, not that word, but at Church we say that I am obedient to my husband. Which means I will keep the house in love, and in warm atmosphere. You see, I love family, I love children, so I'm sure I was going to have a very happy family… but everything turned out the opposite.” She continues that life without being married is very difficult. According to Berjougih a woman is considered half a person when not having a husband in the Middle East. The difficulties that can arise if not having the protection of a man is discussed by Carog as well (this is related in 5.1.1.).

5.2.3. Career

That higher education would lead to career opportunities is not a given according to several women. Obstacles that arise out of being a minority is mentioned in regards to higher studies (2, 6, 9) and career (5, 8, 9). Emma says that it is not only the conflict and Intifadas that makes people leave. “We don't have opportunities here… [Israel] don't give it to you.” While she adds ”it’s ok. We are survivors” she also states that it becomes a problem when people are forced to go abroad to pursue a better education as “90 percent they don't come back.” Beatriz has worked for many years after she graduated from Sts Tarkmanchatz. That she knew four languages from school was good for the career. She has studied a couple more since then as well. She dreamt of a different career though, when she was younger, but had to give it up. According to her you have to be Jewish for that kind of career. Still, she adds that it would be better careerwise to work for an Israeli company. They do give important job positions to women. In the Palestinian community men usually hold the top positions.

88 Marriage is considered a sacrament. In church the priest asks the groom ‘‘Do you speak for her?’ (Ter es?) and the groom answers ‘Yes, I speak for her’ (Ter em). The bride then is asked ‘Are you submissive?’ (Hnazand es?) and she answers ‘Yes, I am submissive’ (Hnazand em)’. Shahnazarian & Ziemer 2014:29.
Berjougih blames men in the Armenian community for not allowing women prominent positions, even if they would have the education for it. She was always more interested to talk about the news than what to cook for dinner. This conduct was not welcomed according to her. "They are afraid of educated smart women". She thinks the reason behind this is that the community is small with male leaders that do not want competition. She gets agitated as she names all the professions that her education should have made possible for her. None would be offered. According to her this is not in line with an Armenian tradition. As proof of this she mentions Armenian queens and poets. The possibility to pursue a dream can also be stopped short because of family needs. Lusine gets tears in her eyes as she quietly talks about how she was not allowed to pursue the profession she had wished for. She partly blames the context. "I wish I was born in Armenia… That way I would have many opportunities". As her family faced difficult circumstances she had to start working right after high school.

5.2.4. Faith and religion

Faith is said to be important for all the women. There are some variation in the descriptions of what this means. A majority connect faith to religion. Karin explains, "I would describe faith as something religious, as that is the way I grew up, and that is something I believe in". When she was getting married it was a really stressful period. She used to pray for everything to be fine and faith helped her. Flora recounts how her husband prayed and had faith for something she could not really believe for. It came to pass. "So, even my husband. He doesn't go to Church... but he has the faith inside him." A majority mention prayer when discussing faith or overcoming difficulties (2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 10). Anahid recalls how God has answered prayers when faced with illnesses in her family. She mentions praying for courage to be able to do everything needed, not to get stuck questioning why, and asking for ideas on how to manage the situation. Like other women Anahid describes it as something which provides strength (2, 3, 6, 8, 9). Carog has sometimes asked God why he is not helping her, but then she returns to the conclusion that God has a purpose in everything that happens. With faith it is sometimes possible to perceive the reason, and other times it is not."I was talking to God, that you know, 'I want to be that vulnerable woman, that simple woman... I'm too tired being tough you know… It’s enough, it's enough, it's enough. I want to be like those stupid women who follow

89 What is called discourse in Discourse theory has here been changed to outlook in order not to confuse it with overall discourse. Jørgensen & Phillips 2002:50
their husbands and they are protected by their husbands, or I don't know, their families or something’… But I know I can't do that”. She laughs. ”But then you know, God gave me the strength again. I fell, and I got up.”

God is mostly related to as a given. For Arousiag, God both unites us and gives us our rights. ”My God and your God is the same God. In the end He is [going to] judge me, not you, not the government, the Israeli or the Palestinian, or the authorities. God is going to judge me.”

Lusine describes faith as “[f]aith in God. Everyone should have faith in God… without faith one cannot live… faith is prayer. You have to pray all the time. You have to thank him, for your health, to have your loved ones around you. Faith that everything will be ok. For the kids to have good future.” After a while she also mentions a period of frustration and anger. She felt lonely in the struggles when her husband was at work. “I used to use my faith with growing our kids…” Help from her mother and occasional relief by talking to a friend were also contributing. Kohar mentions the importance of faith several times. When she was in her twenties her family ended up in a very difficult situation. The grandmother always assured “only pray, everything will be ok. God will give you [a] better life.” Prayer gave comfort and made them stronger. They also supported each other as a family and went to Church a lot.

5.2.4.1. Faith as motivation

The notion of faith as determination and self-will comes across a couple of times. Berjougih believes that faith is crucial. ”All the famous women in our history they all had a very strong faith, and when you have a strong faith, it's the half of the success”. She mentions life achievements that came to pass ”because I had faith that I can do it.” Berjougih adds that faith comes from God. Carog rounds off sharing about all the difficulties she had to face, “I went through a lot, a lot, but thank God my friends were there. And they were listening. And you know ... therapy is by talking, so at least I was able to talk. I mean nobody gave me an advice, because I trust my intuition. And thank God, thank God million times, I feel I have very good intuition”. Many women bring up thankfulness (1, 2, 3, 9, 10). Arousiag explains that while she has gone through her share of difficulties she feels grateful to God.’ We ought to ”thank Him everyday”. When asked if there has been a particular experience where faith was important Sirarpi’s answer is, “Everyday. Everyday is a miracle. Everyday we wake up, open our eyes. People don't realize it, and they take it for granted.” The help from family and friends is often mentioned in connection to discussions about challenges (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 9).
5.2.4.2. Church

Church is often closely connected to the notion of Armenians being Christians (1, 6, 9, 10). For many this equals the Armenian Apostolic Church. After a description of God as the ultimate authority Arousiag concludes with a sort of creed "I believe in myself, I believe in my Church, and I believe in my nation." Emma explains that “we’ve been brought up with faith as our first priority”. She recalls how going to church has been an important part of her life since childhood, "I feel comfort when I go". Sirarpi teaches her children “to be good citizens, good Christians… .” This includes to learn what Christ has done and what God expects through the bible. Although she has friends in many Christian traditions, it is the Armenian faith that is taught within the household. This was a non-negotiable condition, to her non-Armenian husband to be, before getting married. “[Y]ou don’t have to agree with everything… Still, our Church is very deep, it has mystery and knowledge that the new Protestant Churches don’t even get close to. So, my Church is my Church, that’s the faith, that’s how I raise up my children… ultimately when I open up my mouth to pray it's going to be Armenian, not in any other language or any other way of thinking.’

Flora often goes to Church, alone or with one of her children. When discussing the behavior of the young Kohar says “I say to my children ‘number one – you should not go away from your Church’.” She elaborates on the importance to keep the religion and to give your life to God for him to manage it. Otherwise there will be “chaos”. Emma explains why she likes to go. “The burden is taken from me. It's very very comforting.” She complains that some choose to sit and socialize during Liturgy. ”Anyway, I choose my corner. I stand. I pray. My faith.” Despite the severe trouble Carog had because of a priest, it did not alter her love for the Church. It is part of what ties her to Jerusalem. She asserts that she would not exchange her Church for any Church in the world. The locals that attend Liturgy mostly do so on weekends or Feast days. A decline in church attendance is mentioned by Lusine, Flora and Kohar. It is viewed as problematic. The children get bored as the service is so long. Lusine is especially concerned about that her eldest do not wish to go and “thinks that God does not exist”. She liked to go to Church when she was younger. In school they used to learn the choruses and took part in the Liturgy. Back then it was not only the boys in the processions on Feast days. Girls would put on veils and join as well. Nowadays the women wear veils only for communion. Priests have tried, to no avail, to make them adhere to the tradition of wearing a veil during the whole liturgy.
5.2.4.3. To reinterpret tradition

Arpi is the only one that questions the connection of religion and Armenian identity. Still, she does believe there is a fundamental need for value and meaning connected to something "bigger than us". Material things or a career will not provide that. When faced with existential struggle she felt drawn to the Armenian Church. "Because it taught all of the traditions, the comfort places, the smell of the incense, the sound of a certain priest, you know." Like Berjougih she is trying to reinterpret things from her tradition into something which makes sense to her. Find meaning. "So God for me is all of existence with all what we see and don't see. Jesus would be the best version of ourselves. Mother Mary is my mother. The Holy Spirit could be your friends, could be the blessings you have in your life, people... a dog... Sin is everything you do to harm your surroundings, and it usually could come from stupidity or inconsideration, laziness. And I think blessing is wisdom." The priests do not provide the existential or spiritual answers she is looking for. Nor does she perceive spirituality in the women who go to church. "I think that's religion, I think that's pure tradition. And I'm in the constant battle between tradition, which I find comfort in, and spirituality, which I find comfort in, but I'm having a problem connecting them together."

5.3. Social space

The third analysis question "Do the overarching structures of the context provide resources besides their restrictive control?" helps explore the women’s views on 'social space' in the Armenian Quarter and Jerusalem at large.

5.3.1. The Armenian quarter

All of the women except Karin live in the Armenian quarter. She moved when she got married but visits her family in the quarter regularly. Some women live inside of the convent’s walls, while others live on the adjacent streets. In their homes, artefacts witness of Armenian culture and influence. Middle Eastern or Palestinian culture is also evident. Kohar explains that the, about one hundred, families who live in the convent are like a big family. “It's a blessing to live in the convent… For our children also it's very safe”. Sirarpi makes similar reflections. Kohar laughingly recalls when she could not find her keys as she had not used them to lock the door for months.

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90 Jørgensen & Phillips 2002:50
To monitor outsiders on the premises appears important. On three different occasions Armenian pilgrims, that have stayed at the compound, share how they also have been addressed with suspicion, even aggression, as locals suspect them to be ‘outsiders’. A woman of Armenian descent, which have stayed for a longer period, claims it to be difficult to make friends in the local community. She marvels at how a group of men, outside one of the clubs, turned their backs on her and refused to talk to her any further. This was after, very reluctantly, answering her initial pleasantries.

5.3.1.1. Social life and the clubs
Much of the communal social life is arranged through political clubs. A majority of the interviewees occasionally attend social events. A couple of women are involved in organizing community events. Often activities are arranged in connection to Church feasts. Whether or not the women on the committee have a real say about things, or mainly cater to practical needs, is discussed in two interviews (1, 8). Lusine’s husband claims that it is mostly the women who cook, serve food and clean at events. It takes some discussion before Lusine agrees on this. Interestingly, as mentioned before, he insists that their culture is not patriarchal. Berjougih claims that the main decisions are made by the men. “That's why I'll never be at the committee.” According to her things used to be different. Previously women were elected and could take more decisions. She recaptures a couple of incidents when she was bullied by a male leader of the community. One time at a gathering. No one stepped forward to defend her. She believes they are jealous and afraid of what she could accomplish. They choose to instead listen to gossip. At an event a woman laments that there is fighting between fractions in the community.

5.3.2. Jerusalem
Sirarpi refers to Jerusalem as “a melting pot” when it comes to religion. Yet, during the interviews, religion is mentioned only a couple of times when the city is discussed (2, 9, 10). Jerusalem is foremost home (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10). Arousiag talks about her strong attachment to Jerusalem, “it's nice to be here. Jerusalem, I'm talking about Jerusalem. Not Israel, not Palestine, Jerusalem itself. It's the country of Jesus. He came here, and he sacrificed himself for us, he died for us, no matter what we are, Muslims or Christians or Jews or Armenians.” While she is proud to be Armenian and calls Armenia "her country” it is in Jerusalem she belongs. ”I’m Armenian-Palestinian because I was born here… my family story and history is
here.” She cannot consider to leave, as it is where her parents and other close relatives are buried. Arousiag talks about how different powers have ruled Jerusalem. She is grateful for her pension and that health insurance has been introduced after the Israelis took over. Yet she experiences a sense of not belonging conveyed by the authorities through other actions. She explains that they have Jordanian passports, not Israeli. “They are the government and we are under their occupation, so we have to shut our mouth and live peacefully.” Different kinds of struggles connected to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are mentioned by many (1, 2, 6, 9, 10). Carog lived abroad for some years and although she enjoyed it tremendously she returned home. ”I love Jerusalem, I love Jerusalem. I am a pure Jerusalemite. Yes, I have great attachment to this place although it's a crazy place. It has a lot of problems”. Family, and especially her many good friends, was what drew her back. Back to her roots. “[T]here are a lot of challenges here in Jerusalem. Every day, there is something. Ok, most of the time it upsets you more than it makes you happy, but you know, what's life without challenges.” When Carog had to deal with all the problems caused by the neighboring businessman, on top of the difficulties the landlord gave her, the situation was further complicated by the tense situation in Jerusalem. In the Old city it is not accepted to involve the authorities. “If you bring the police it's like ‘oh, you are a traitor’. Finally she did not see any other option than turn to a municipal department for help. While the man was furious and lashed out at Carog, he had to comply. Otherwise, the Jewish female inspector threatened him with a substantial fine. Carog also mentions trouble during the first intifada, but adds that ”being an Armenian we don't really get into these things.” She views this as a plus. ”We are aware, we do watch, and we do feel for these things of course, but we don't get involved. Politically we do not get involved.” Sirarpi says “yes there are Jews and there are Arabs, and there's oppressor and oppressee, the whole thing, everybody knows the political situation. But at the same time, you're living here. Yes, know right from wrong, but remember you have to submit to your authorities”. She says this is a difficult path as a minority. One of her children competed at a professional level in sports. One day after practice the child came home very upset. The trainers had discovered that they are Christian and were therefore not going to allow the child to represent them at a competition. This caused an identity crises in the 12 year old. ”They don't respect us, they don't love us, they don't accept us. What am I doing here?” Up until then the child had been trained on top level with the Israelis. After this the family had to find options abroad for the child to continue competing. Sirarpi adds that the Armenians are still very protected by their
community. Many other children are forced into identity crises much earlier than her child. When discussing different kinds of challenges, racism from the Jewish community is said to cause difficulties for the minorities in several interviews (1, 3, 4, 9, 10). Arpi says “I'm a second class citizen here. But I think we have bigger problems, as a human race..., than the Israeli occupation.” She mentions people suffering in Syria and refugees. Anahid is also grateful as she compares the situation in Jerusalem to Syria and Lebanon. She exclaims “Thank God that we have everything here”. Yet, she concludes, it is not like the 'normal lives’ people can lead in countries like Sweden or France. Several times she states how life can be very, very difficult. This is also connected to the political situation. When the interview is finished she adds, that people ought to know, that the situation is difficult for the Palestinians. That the politics are not fair. There should be equality among all groups in Jerusalem. ”I want peace, just peace for everybody”. According to Anahid the situation, with checkpoints and need of special permits, affects people’s health. High blood pressure and diabetes are common. “We [even] had to take permission to go to Church and see the pope”. When we talk about dreams, Kohar mentions peace between Jews and Arabs. Flora laughs and says that she cannot even imagine this. Kohar continues to reflect on how it affects their lives. The worst fear is not for oneself, but for family and friends. When moving about the city anything might happen. ”There are many stabbings, even in the light trains, in the market.” Two women mention everyday challenges that causes stress (1, 5). Beatriz has to walk through the Old city on her way to work. Early in the morning she has had many uncomfortable encounters with men that make disrespectful comments. They do not realize that she understands Arabic as they take her for being Jewish or a foreigner. She has been on the verge of tears at times. Lusine finds it stressful to go to the market. Her Arabic is broken and they mistake her for being Jewish. In order to avoid the peril to be overpriced and poor quality meat, she sometimes asserts ”I'm like you.” As in being a local Palestinian. She laughs a bit saying this, as she considers herself strictly Armenian.

Kohar also mentions the conflicts between the Churches. “There is always problems”. Yet there is also a sense of pride when discussing the situation. ”[W]e are few but we have the same rights as the others. In all the Churches.” Emma says that the multiple challenges have led people to emigrate. ”To look for a better life.” Three women mention that they would wish to

91 There was a surge in tension that began in the autumn 2015. Lone wolf knife attacks by Palestinian youth is referred to here.
move to Armenia (1, 6, 8). A relative to Lusine moved to Armenia and likes it very much. Lusine is, next to Flora and Berjougih, the only one that explicitly says she would like to move. She is concerned for the safety of her children. ”The kids are now small, when they grow up policemen will stop [them] ’give me your id, where are you from’. Asking questions.” The sound of a helicopter or sirens sets off thoughts about what might have happened. She believes Armenia is much safer than Jerusalem. Her husband agrees “because it's a homogeneous environment”. He continues to explain that in Jerusalem there is also the risk that one of their children would wish to ”marry a Jew or a Muslim or something.” To be able to prevent that as a parent is not a given.

Chapter 6 Analyses

In this section the interview material presented in chapter 5 will be analyzed further with the aid of the aforementioned theories. The aim is to answer the research question about the women’s agency. As agency is connected to negotiations of identity, in relation to outlook and social space, these concepts will be explored first through Discourse theory (6.1.-6.1.4). The operationalization of the theory is presented in 3.5.Approach. Secondly, structuration theory will be applied to illustrate how the women aim to position themselves through resistance, empowerment, instrumental, and compliant means (6.2.-6.2.4.). An outline of the theory is found in 3.2. Finally, a conclusion, together with a discussion on power structures, will be presented (6.3.). This part is guided by intersectional theory. See 3.3. for a definition.

6.1. A Jerusalemite Armenian identity

The women strongly connect their identity to ethnicity. Armenian that is. Or occasionally a clarification is added – a ”Jerusalemite Armenian”. Through what Discourse theory describes as ”the logic of equivalence” this ’key sign’ is linked to the ’signs’ culture, heritage and Christian (see Figure 1). These ‘signs’ constitute a ’hegemonic discourse’ about being Armenian. An ideal that is perceived as a norm by a majority, while others find it more

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93 With the help of Intersectional theory (Lykke 2003, 2005)
problematic. To *stand their ground* can also be considered a 'sign'. The expression mostly refers to being able to keep land, buildings and rights. The holy places in particular. It can also be understood to symbolize how they have been able to keep a distinct Armenian identity. Because there are constantly influences, in the multicultural environment of Jerusalem, which can be perceived as threats to ‘Armenianess’. Identity is constantly negotiated in regards to 'the others’. Only Arpi, while a proud Armenian, voices frustration over the demarcations around their collective ethnic identity. She views this "reduction of possibilities",\(^\text{94}\) of what it means to be Armenian, negatively. The strong association of Armenian with Christian prevents the possibility to openly embrace other belief systems. Like the others Arpi positions 'Armenian' in duality to 'the others'. 'The others' are often represented by *the Jews*, who are in majority in Jerusalem, and also by *the Palestinians*. As Arabs, as Muslims, and at times as other Christians. Some of the women do feel very close to their Palestinian neighbors. How strong this identification is varies and also depends on the topic at hand.

### 6.1.1. Culture and identity

At times culture is presented as outside of the spatial-temporal existence, as a timeless entity adhered to past and future generations. Sometimes it is referred to as an ideal, or as a synonym for past customs, tradition and heritage. But mostly it is discussed as the current practice of the lived life, that of the women and those they relate to. Armenian culture is said to be in between 'the others’. That is between the more liberal Jews and other Palestinian Christians. The Palestinian Muslims are considered the most traditional. In what appears as a 'hegemonic discourse' about Armenian women this 'key sign' is often related to the 'signs' *home* and *motherhood*. Accordingly, Armenian men represent 'the other'. Tradition seems to have persisted in many regards. A man is often seen as *the provider* and is thereby to a greater extent connected to *public space*. A discursive struggle is noticeable. Interestingly a majority describe themselves, or Armenian women in general, as *hardworking* and *strong*. Descriptions that are claimed to often characterize men in patriarchal environments.\(^\text{95}\)

When the women relate to norms they use different strategies to position themselves – within tradition, outside of it, or against it. At times there are contradictions. Arousiag appears to position herself within the tradition. She first mentions the features that made her mother a

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\(^{94}\) Jørgensen & Phillips 2002:30, 34, 38, 40-44  
\(^{95}\) Burke 2017:122
“respectable woman”. In connection to this she also stresses the need to live according to the surrounding customs. Yet later she proclaims that she could consider to live with a man outside of marriage. She mentions cultural changes, but this would definitely be taboo according to both previous examples. To define herself as a woman of *strong character* appears to legitimize this. Karin situates herself outside the norm by explaining how she is different to all the women she grew up with. Armenians included. Education has always been a priority for her and her family, set right before starting a family. Still, this could be more an indication of the level of love and dedication Karin has for her studies, because education is said to be important in all interviews. For Berjougih *educated* is a ’sign’ of Armenian women. In her line of reasoning it is placed within the tradition of nurturing and motherhood.

6.1.2. The Armenian heritage and identity

The *Armenian heritage* can, like the other ’signs’ of culture, be viewed as a ’key sign’ as well. As such, it is filled with different meanings. *Language* is key. Several women mention this. Next to this the ’signs’ *religion* and *attitudes* are part of the heritage. A majority automatically refer to their roots only by the patristic side. It is ’the other’, the Armenian men, that are the representatives of the family. While not often mentioned, *music* and *food* also applies as ’signs’. They are an inevitable part of how the heritage lives on in everyday life. Middle Eastern culture is often evident in tandem with the Armenian.

6.1.3. Christianity and identity

The importance of Christianity, or more specifically the Armenian Apostolic Church, is to historically unite the Armenians. This is something all the women agree on. A majority of the women connect faith with religion. As a key sign *religion* consists of the signs *faith, prayer* and *Church*. The meaning and importance the women read into this varies. The relationship between faith and prayer is significant. They are explained to have helped many through difficult times. God is most often related to as a given. Jesus Christ is mentioned only a couple of times, but not when faith or religion is particularly discussed. While Arpi, Lusine, Sirarpi and Arousiag briefly mention dogma, the majority do not. So *belief*, as in dogma, could be interpreted as a contested ’sign’. But it can also be a matter of taking it for granted. For Arpi dogma ought to be questioned. By reinterpretation she formulates her own ”order of existence” which connects this heritage to her world view. *Liturgy*, which is fundamental in the Armenian
Apostolic Church, can also be added to a general understanding of what religion is. Again, there is not necessarily a correlation between the Church’s definition of liturgy and the women’s experience of it. Faith is not always associated to the religious sphere as described above. It is also recognized as the motivational force in life. Faith in oneself is also mentioned. For Arpi it is the Armenian culture that has prominence. A discursive struggle\textsuperscript{96} between discourses can be distinguished through what she shares. Religion is for her a 'sign' among others as \textit{culture} is the 'key sign’. For her the creeds and formulations by the priests neither seem motivational nor realistic. Religion is thereby, for her, something separate from faith and spirituality.

6.1.4. Jerusalem, and the home of the Armenian quarter

The Armenians have a longstanding presence in Jerusalem and their quarter is a visible externalization of this. The expression connected to this, that the Armenians have been able to \textit{stand their ground}, emanates pride. To be custodians of the holy places, and have the same rights as the larger Latin and Greek communities, is part of this as well. Strongly connected to the Armenian identity is therefore territory and its related 'social space.’ Jerusalem, the Armenian quarter, and Armenia, are all mentioned in this regard. For a majority the discourse about Jerusalem as a 'key sign’ is connected to the 'signs' \textit{home, holy places} and \textit{conflict}. A couple of women also mention \textit{occupation}. For a majority home is foremost the Armenian quarter. This is also where some of the women feel the most secure. Yet for others the boundaries are more fluid and they freely traverse the invisible borders of the neighboring communities. The prevalence of conflict comes across in all interviews except with Karin.

The Armenian quarter can be considered a ‘sign’, as well as a 'key sign’. Because at times the quarter is positioned in opposition to the rest of Jerusalem. Next to \textit{home} it represents all the things 'the other’ Jerusalem is not — \textit{safe} and \textit{homogenous}. Some women do mention \textit{conflict} within the community as well. Institutions, as the Church and the Armenian school, are said to represent and promote Armenian identity and way of life. A majority views this as positive. Armenia provides a strong symbolic value although a majority do not wish to relocate there. Berjougih, Lusine and Flora are the exceptions. It is viewed as the \textit{homeland, peaceful, homogenous} and \textit{Christian}. Again Jerusalem is positioned as 'the other’. Yet, the city is considered home, despite the conflicts.

\textsuperscript{96} Jørgensen & Phillips 2002:6-7
6.2 Agency
In this section different approaches of agency will be highlighted. Different stances taken by the women in the interviews are categorized as *resistance*, *empowerment*, *instrumental*, and *compliant*.97

6.2.1. Resistance
Arpi’s and Carog’s strength is apparent in how they choose to resist certain parts of their culture. A culture they strongly identify with. Their identity as Jerusalemite Armenian is explained to be somewhat different compared to the others. Features of Palestinians culture has been embraced as well.

Arpi (30-35, single) manages to exert *resistance* while she appears to be considered an Armenian role model by some. Although deliberate, in that she does not want to restrict herself to a particular norm, she does not appear very vocal in her questioning. It is a stance she has taken for her own life choices. Through her work and in her aim to support the young she is recognized to contribute to the community.

Carog (55-60, single) has paid a price for her *resistance*. She remains firm in her choices, but the fights have taken a toll on her health. To be free is considered very important. More so than what protection in marriage could give. To have to be subordinate to a man is not for her. Despite what a priest put her through, she loves ’her church,’ and she feels that God helps her. There is some *empowerment* in that. Still, it is her own intuition she trusts the most. Even more than the advice from her good friends. To remain strong is therefore a must, although excruciating at times.

6.2.2. Empowerment
Berjouglih (55-60) is well educated. She finds *empowerment* by viewing the *tradition* and *heritage* through a feminist lens, though she does not mention feminism. For her the queens, female poets and educators, throughout the Armenian history, testify to that women are not secondary. This is what she deems to be the ’real’ Armenian tradition. When women have been

97 Burke 2017:124
restricted, this has been because of foreign rulers and cultures. Or as for her, in the Jerusalemite Armenian community, because of particular leaders. For her, the central role of *motherhood* in Armenian culture is accentuated through its educational role. Ultimately this gives women prominence to educate, not only the children, but "the whole nation." *Religion* provides *empowerment* as well. The promise by the woman, to be submissive to her husband in the marriage ceremony, is reinterpreted to symbolize to "keep the house in love.” She claims to be *compliant* with the traditions. Had she been married she is certain to have made an excellent wife. As for now she does not have the protection of a man. Instead she feels exposed to gossip and bullying. There appears to be a discrepancy, in the interpretation of the role of women in Armenian culture, between her and the male community leaders.

6.2.3. Instrumental

Karin and Arousiag both convey an *instrumental* approach to *tradition* and *religion*.

Karin (25-30 married) is very ambitious. To a certain extent tradition and religion appear as an assimilated and a natural part of her Armenian identity. Yet, through linguistic and social skills, she constantly transcends cultural barriers. Both in her studies, work and in being married to a non-Armenian husband. Her husband provides strong support and so do her parents. She does not perceive any limits when it comes to following her dreams. This includes to combine a career with having children later on. She claims to be different than the majority of the girls she grew up with in the Old city.

Arousiag (55-60 single) expresses great pride in the Armenian tradition and culture. She is also well integrated in the Palestinian culture. To live in harmony with the surrounding context is given prominence according to her. That "all have the same God” is said to be the foundation for this. Yet, she would be willing to live with a man without getting married. This is not a commonly accepted behavior in the Old city. To marry is not considered an option, as it would constrain her much valued freedom. Her strength and independence are also expressed through the notion that only "God is going to judge me”, not the authorities, nor anyone else. She and a male relative support each other. While she assists him in house chores he in turn helps her a bit financially.
6.2.4. Compliant

The majority of the women – Beatriz, Flora, Kohar, Lusine, Emma, Sirarpi and Anahid – are perceived to take an overall compliant approach towards tradition and religion.

Beatriz\(^9\) (25-30, single) presents a compliant approach to tradition in how she manages her life and dreams. The Armenian identity and community are considered very important. In some regards she feels restricted, in society at large, as a minority. Although she was not asked the question about faith, a compliant approach to religion can be discerned. How to meet a future husband is left into the hands of God.

Flora (35-40, married) and Kohar (40-45, married) both appear very compliant to tradition and religion. They uphold tradition as devoted wives and active mothers. Their hectic schedules can limit them in a minor manner. This in regards to not being able to travel, but as motherhood is considered as a pivotal role, this is not a big loss. Kohar has managed to study, work and be involved in community arrangements. All with the approval of her husband. She is determined, able and works hard to instill these values in the younger generations as well. This they both do. Emma (50-55, single), that is part of the interview as well, appears compliant with tradition and religion. While not married, she communicates traditional values. As life is said to be very good, while difficulties are expressed in very general terms, there are hardly any details about agency to analyze. The importance given to religion, by all of them, is also evident in regular attendance of Liturgy.

Lusine (40-45, married) conveys a compliant approach to tradition and religion. She had to abandon her teenage dream to pursue a different career, and begin to work, as the family needs are paramount. Connected to this there is still hurt and insecurity expressed. Faith and church attendance are explained to have provided strength to overcome difficulties. Conflicts, ranging from minor everyday struggles to stress caused by belonging to a minority, make a move to Armenia seem as the solution.

Sirarpi (50-55, married to non-Armenian husband) appears to have taken a compliant stance in

\(^9\) As the interview was not recorded the analyses is less detailed.
regard to tradition and religion. She presents herself as an Armenian woman who is submissive in line with the tradition and religion. First to her father as a daughter, then as a wife to her husband, and lastly as a citizen to the Israeli authorities. Faith serves as a source of power for her. She also draws strength from the Armenian heritage and strives to pass this on to her children. Furthermore, tradition and religion provide empowerment for her identity as a mother. When restrictions are inflicted on her children other possibilities are searched out. To push her children to excel is important, because through education and career they are to carry the legacy from her father and grandfather. To be survivors of the genocide appears to be part of this heritage, and thereby serves as a motivator as well. For Sirarpi to be submissive does not mean, to allow circumstances or people, to prevent her children from excelling. Or from making both family and hopefully the community proud.

Anahid (60-65 married) appears compliant to tradition and religion. She has enjoyed to tend to the needs of others since she was a girl. To be a caretaker is an inevitable part of her character. So is stamina. To be strong is crucial for women according to her. To serve does not come from a position of inferiority, nor superiority. According to Anahid women are often more able than men. She has found men to be rather helpless in some regards. As life can be very difficult God’s support is invaluable. She finds empowerment in faith and family.

6.3. Conclusion

The purpose of this study has been to explore identity and agency of twelve women in a complex context. Conflict and religion are prevalent in Jerusalem. There are several indicators of the patriarchal features in this context. Through the research question and three analysis questions a multifaceted picture emerge. Below is a discussion on how gender, ethnicity and age, together with education, career and marriage, are connected to the women’s agency in this environment.

6.3.1. Identity

All women present themselves as Armenians. Still, there are variations to the meaning ascribed to this identity. Through socialization, discourses about existence and the Armenian heritage, have been transmitted to the women. These have in turn been negotiated, accepted or refused, by the individual. Throughout this process, influenced by the multicultural context of
Jerusalem, a fragmented and overdetermined identity develops. This identity, with its individual variations, can best be described as a Jerusalemite Armenian identity.

6.3.2. The power dynamics of structure

In the daily life of the women they form different strategies to manage life. This most often unconscious process involves to assess situations and act accordingly. The options perceived as the best possible, within a social space, are influenced by identity and outlook. In the multicultural city of Jerusalem the women have several contexts to relate to. Contexts which consist of structures composed by hegemonic discourses. It is also necessary to consider axis of power, the power dynamics that works through the structures, are generally restrictive. That is, they instruct how to behave within a social space. An important part of the case study is therefore to reflect on which power structures are at play. As described above Armenian culture and heritage are perceived as important influencers on the women. So is the Armenian quarter with its institutions. The Armenian Apostolic Church, with the Patriarchate and the Brotherhood of St James, have influence on many of these. Men occupy main leadership roles. When women are part of leadership it is in supporting roles. This is the case in most of the surrounding cultures as well. All women also relate to them at least in part and to different degrees.

The society in Jerusalem is divided in many ways, which becomes evident especially in regards to ethnicity and religious affiliation. These conflicts bring out a sense of feeling ostracized from society at large in some of the women. The many markers for what is considered as ”the others”, when identity is negotiated, appear to be fortified by the friction. It consolidates the feeling of being different. This can be experienced both as a challenge and as a resource. There are many examples on how the women find empowerment in their heritage and identity as Armenian women. Religion provides meaning in the context as well. Even those who do not consider themselves ”believers” still relate to it. Resistance, empowerment, instrumental and compliant approaches do intermingle, as the individual women (re-)interpret tradition and religion. A compliant approach appears as dominant. While freedom is of great importance for

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99 Jørgensen & Phillips 2002:33-34, 54-56
101 Giddens 1984:162-168
102 Cambell 2010:19
some, a majority prioritize community.\textsuperscript{103} Family can be perceived as a resource as well.

6.3.3. Resources for agency

The idea of structures as not solely restrictive has been a preunderstanding of this study. The structures guide how the women are situated. Still, the fact that an individual has several identities at her disposal might present her with alternatives. When an individual is socialized into a system this knowledge can be viewed as an asset. Through this certain possibilities, to use the structures to position oneself in the best possible way, are provided.\textsuperscript{104} Education is an important axis of power. All of the interviewed women are educated and come across as knowledgeable. Language is an asset which brings a certain amount of power. With fluent Hebrew or Arabic you can blend in among the larger groups of society. To be able to show that you belong in this multicultural context has proven to give access to benefits which will otherwise not be available. If you appear to not belong, to come from the ‘other’ group, you might miss out on opportunities. This can cause stress in weekly chores as grocery shopping (1). Or it might restrict your options for higher education or certain careers (5, 6). Still, Karin has never felt restricted. By both looks and her language skills she blends in. In both Jewish and Arab society, there is also an indication that to have the right contacts can give certain protection. Contrary to a majority of the women Karin says to never have encountered any difficulties because of her gender. A contributive factor is likely to be the protection from Karin’s family.

6.3.4. Restrictions for agency

Prominence is given to family and community in the Old city of Jerusalem. Therefore, a multifaceted picture emerges when aiming to understand the complexity of the women’s agency. As part of a family, or a group, the individual can receive advantages. It could also lead to disadvantages because of a bad reputation. In society at large the Armenians are a small minority, which contributes to that they are often viewed as Palestinian. This occurs whether they identify as Palestinian-Armenian or not. Difficulties and discrimination because of ethnicity is mentioned in several interviews. In addition there are several conflicts that to different degrees affect everyday life. The prominence of family is inherent both in the

\textsuperscript{103} Burke 2017:122-124
\textsuperscript{104} Giddens1984:162-165
Armenian heritage and the surrounding culture. So is patriarchy. It is thereby a hegemonic discourse that is not likely to be easily challenged. While Arpi has been able to transcend boundaries it has not contributed to overall change. There are claims that cultural changes are apparent in the younger generations.

It is mainly through motherhood women are celebrated. A unique female feature is her childbearing capacity. This connects her to the care of children, and an expectation to take care of the home. For a majority of the women the tendency to put family over individual needs comes naturally. Although they have to work hard it is experienced as meaningful by many. When it collides with other personal aspirations it can cause grief. Lusine’s sacrifice of her dream of a vocational education illustrates this. The meaning of hardworking and strong, although not synonymous, can overlap. As a daughter, a wife, a mother you are expected to take care of the needs of others. In a couple of interviews it is also recognized, in combination with other conflicts, that it can be overwhelming. To feel ‘burnt out’ is mentioned by two of the women when I later return to Jerusalem. To defy customs through resistance can come with a price.

Carog became a target through her endeavor to run a business ’on her own’. In this patriarchal environment a woman still needs the support of a husband or other males. This to avoid becoming a target of misogyny and harassment in the public sphere. In the marriage liturgy the woman promises to be submissive to the husband. If and how this is the case in the household is likely to vary. This promise has made three of the women abandon the thought of marriage. They are all described as strong. It appears as a necessity to conjure strength in order defy norms. The need of community and care of others is not abandoned by the trio. By resistance (2, 4) and instrumental means (10) they strive to maintain freedom. However, ultimately the freedom of agency for a majority of the women seem reliant on the men in their lives. As Arpi states ”it still depends on how much the man allows”.

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105 Giddens 1984:162-165
Chapter 7 Discussion

In this chapter a discussion of the result, evaluation of theory and methodology, will be followed by an empirical reflection with suggestions for further research.

7.1. Discussion of the result

The life of the Armenian quarter includes the experiences of the women - the successful and/or struggling entrepreneurs, artists, caretakers and stay-at-home-moms. Despite their differences, they share many features that define them as a group. These Jerusalemite Armenian women, in many regards, appear to be the opposite of the assimilated Armenians in Bakalian’s study (1993). A difference which Azarya noted more than thirty years ago (1984). Despite some inevitable changes over time, the Armenian quarter has remained a defended neighborhood. The symbiosis between the lay Armenians and the clergy at the monastery continues. So do the conflicts in the surrounding context. Together with the fragmented multicultural environment, these conflicts seem to prevent integration into the larger society. Thereby the Armenian identity is further consolidated.

There are several factors in the context that work restrictively on the women. First and foremost it appears connected to that women are acknowledged mainly through motherhood and as makers of the home. A majority of the women reiterate this. Shahnazarian and Ziemer’s claim that there is a demand on Armenian women to marry and have children is confirmed. So is Sara Brown’s claim that the main role for women in a patriarchal context is as gatekeepers of the home. This was the first time since I first visited the community for a field study in February 2015 that I was invited into homes. Several as well. The second part of her claim was also evident as women proudly were promoted as the educator of the children. Motherhood is at the center of how women are perceived as agents. It appears to be common with occupations that are in line with the tradition described above. Teachers or caregiving professions. Administration as well. Artistic creativity is within the Armenian tradition. Yet the entrepreneurial side of it, as in running a business or open a store, is not. If you are a woman that is. The public sphere is dominated by the men. So while the women can exercise agency in a number of ways there are restrictions to traverse.

106 Azarya 1984:171-179
The Church, as patron of the Armenian quarter and through its tradition, uphold these gender roles. It also provides meaning for at least half of the women. This does mean that all connect this to spirituality, not dogma. According to Azarya the community is secular in its outlook. This study cannot dispute or affirm that. Yet many women, and others in the community, very naturally refer to God. According to Gunner and Halvardsson the main contributor to the influence of religion is its social relevance. Religious practice like prayer provide comfort and strength for many. While Arpi questions religion she does find comfort in the Liturgy. The Armenian tradition and culture also provide meaning. Berjougih finds confirmation for her identity, as an educated Armenian woman who is compliant with her Church, by drawing on and reinterpreting tradition. There is empowerment in this. Or situational power as Karlsson Minganti calls the outcome of the negotiations of gender, religion and ethnicity by the individual. Women also contribute to the upholding, as well as alterations, of the structures. They are part of the societal system where gossip still functions as a means to uphold community norms. At least on the surface that is. Those that break with community norms appear to prefer to not be very vocal about it. An indication of that it is perceived to come with a risk and how structures do come with restriction.

7.2. Evaluation of theory, methodology and empirical reflections

The raison d'être for empirical research is to generate new knowledge. As Anthony Giddens has pointed out, what is considered new information by some is not necessarily new to others. Arpi already acknowledged that the Jerusalemite Armenian identity is different than other Armenian identities. This is not reflected upon by a majority of the interviewees though. The strength of research lies within its systematization of social relationship. By the use of theory and methodology from Discourse theory, together with structuration and intersectional approaches, light is shed on that which in everyday life is taken for granted. As class was not included as a category, reflections on material restrictions can be deemed as insufficient. Still, because of the character of the community and for the purpose of the study, other categories were found to be of more importance.

107 Gunner & Halvardsson 2006:35-36, 39
108 Karlsson Minganti 2007:12-17, 21-25, 34
109 Azarya 1984:179
110 Giddens 1984:334
It has been argued that with the social constructionist approach arrives the notion that the research cannot be validated, since it is but a temporal statement in a never-ending deconstruction of discourse. I do not believe this to be correct. There are context-bound limits to what is perceived as meaningful when describing something. The many months I have spent in the Armenian quarter, also while writing this report, have served the study well. Through observations and interactions a deeper understanding, of what was discussed with the women and life in the community, has been obtained. This report is evidently influenced by me as a researcher, due to the interpretative nature of this qualitative case study. The risk of bias also results from the interview situation in itself, together with influences from the chosen theories that guide the research. The plurality of the results, together with reflexivity and considerations regarding different power structures are believed to contribute to a more balanced report. The use of semi-structured questions suggests a more solid result. By asking about faith instead of religion it was possible to discern more secular tendencies as well. While no generalizations can be made, insights into the experiences of these women of the Armenian community in Jerusalem are given.

7.3. Suggestions for future research

As the genocide was only discussed by a few women in my study its influence might appear negligible. Yet it is evidently something they relate to. Emma in passing refers to being “survivors”. The implication of the term ”survivors”, in contrast to victims, is agency. Emma by this indicates that the Armenians will overcome any discrimination and challenges. There is resemblance to the women in Eli Göndör’s study. A ”mental transition, from being a marginalized or underprivileged minority” takes place. While this does not mean they are in numerical majority, the Armenians are many times described as ’special’ by the women. The connotations of these statements are positive. Yet there are also obligations that appear to come out of this. Bakalian claims this as a heritage from the Armenian genocide (in reference to Boyajian and Grigorian, 1986). As mentioned in the introduction Arlene Voski Avakian’s concern is that it hinders the community from addressing more urgent matters. The influence of the Armenian genocide on subsequent generations is a topic that would deserve further research.

The indications and claims of a shift in attitudes and customs among the young, is a field of study that needs more investigation as well. While no generalization can be made from this
study, it is worth to notice, there was no apparent connection between age and diversion from tradition. As the interviewees are adults the changes that are mentioned seem to concern the youth. A claim that was reiterated by a couple of other people in the community as well. This is furthermore in agreement with indications of my field study among youth in 2016. The effects of social media could be fruitful to investigate in connection to this, as its global reach do appear transformative. Furthermore, I wish to suggest that the possibility to do participatory research should be searched out. Synergic outcomes can be expected when local knowhow is involved in the research process. Outcomes that hopefully would benefit a community that in certain regards seems to struggle for its survival.

Summary

This thesis explores identity and agency of twelve women in the Armenian quarter of Jerusalem. Agency refers to the means and influence of the women. The aim is to learn about the amount of latitude the women perceive in their daily lives in a predominately patriarchal context. A context furthermore marked by religion and several conflicts. A qualitative approach, with semi-structured interviews, observations and the methodology of Discourse theory, informs the case study. The introduction in chapter 1, is followed by a research review in chapter 2, chapter 3 explains theory and concepts, chapter 4 methodology and material, in chapter 5 the results are presented, which in turn are analysed in chapter 6, and to conclude chapter 7 offers a discussion. Attention is especially given to the identity markers gender, ethnicity and age. These are, together with education, career, marriage and religion, understood to influence latitude. The case study illustrates how the women’s agency is connected to complex negotiations of identity and outlook in relation to social space. By the means of a multifaceted Jerusalemite Armenian identity the women are provided with resources for how to negotiate life on a daily basis. That is, alongside the culturally specific restrictions. There are many constraints on women in this context. While individual freedom is of great importance for a few, the majority give priority to community.
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Appendix

Interview questions
Gather general information as age, place of residence, education, marital status and family.

Five semi-structured questions:
1. Please describe a typical weekday
2. What dreams do you hope to a. experience b. achieve
   Have any dreams of yours come true yet?
3. Which challenges do you perceive in your daily life?
4. Is there any experience in your life where faith was an important factor?
5. Where do you turn for advice and guidance?

Closing question – Is there something you would like to add?