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THE COMPARISON BETWEEN IDEAL AND PROJECTED IMAGES OF POLITICAL LEADERS IN  
ARMENIA

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## *Abstract*

Various studies indicate that image of political leaders has an impact on voters decisions. Current research clarifies traits and characteristics, which can motivate electorate to prefer one candidate to another. The ideal image of political leader is developed based on these desired traits. However, it is only one side of this research, and on the other side, the projected image of political leaders in Armenia is explored. In order to identify it content analysis of two political leaders' images was conducted. These candidates are Raffi Hovannisian and Serzh Sargsyan, who ran for the post of the President in 2013. The analysis of political leaders projected images permitted defining what kind of symbols were used by political leaders, and which kind of stereotypes and ideas, were underlined by leaders themselves.



## ***Introduction***

Nowadays in modern democratic societies, the image of political leaders becomes important, mainly because people elect their representatives not only based on their political programs, but also based on their personal images. In these circumstances, the image of political leaders turns out to be more significant during the elections. Every society or even every person can have his or her own perception of an ideal political leader. This work is presenting the ideal leader for the Armenian society and his or her main characteristics. An ideal political leader is a behavioral model, which is perceived as a best one by the society. Nevertheless, reality and desires are not always the same that is why besides the image of ideal political leader we should also define the projected image of political leaders. The projected image includes all these characteristics, which are underlined by the leaders themselves, so it is an image, which they try to convey through their booklets, advertisements, speeches, etc. Both projected and ideal images include all those characteristics, traits, features, etc, which are associated with political leaders. There is almost no research done on this topic in Armenia that is why the main contribution of this study is the presentation of a comparison between ideal and projected images of political leaders in Armenia. The presentation of the ideal image can assist leaders to make their projected image closer to the expectations of the society and as a result become the choice of the society.

The current paper consists of three chapters: the first chapter "Definitions and types of image" presents definitions of image suggested by different authors, based on which the concept



“image” is defined for this research. The second part presents various types of images, primarily two types, which are going to be widely used during this research: projected and ideal images.

Chapter 2, "Political leadership and images of political leaders", presents the concept of leadership and mainly this concept's expression in politics. In this chapter, the focus is on the political leadership and political leaders. Here the main traits and characteristics are presented, which can be considered as a base for political leader's image.

Chapter 3 presents the research methodology, which includes the research questions, hypothesis and main research methods.

Chapter 4 presents main data gathered during this research. It includes the results from content analysis, where images of Presidential candidates were analyzed and summarizes the results from focus groups, based on which the ideal image of political leader for Armenian society is estimated.



## ***Chapter 1: Image: Types and Definitions***

Image is a general term, which is widely used in different spheres. Consequently it is difficult to find one common definition of it, due to the existence of various definitions. The development of a definition of image is a main objective of this chapter. The main types of images, primarily the projected and ideal images of political leaders are also discussed here.

### ***1.1 Definitions of Image***

The term “image” had been widely used by different authors in their publications. The word "image" comes from the Latin word "imago" (Boorstin, 1962). It was defined in a different ways by different scholars; usually those definitions can present totally different things, which to some extent can contradict to each other. Here several definitions of this term will be presented. Image can be defined as:

- "Image is the mental perceptions of the person related to an Object, a Product, Service, an individual or an organization" ( Shri A.M. Ramachandraiah and Shri N. Palaniappan , 2009, p. 18).
- The impression that a person, an organization or a product, etc. gives to the public (Stern, 2001).
- An image is synthetic. It is planned: created especially to serve a purpose, to make a certain kind of impression. The term "image" conveys what a person or an organization appears to be, which is sometimes very different from who/what they actually are in private (Boorstin, 1962).



- A reproduction or imitation of the form of a person or thing, especially: an imitation in solid form (G. V. Caprara, S. Schwartz, C. Capanna, M. Vecchione, and C. Barbaranelli, 2006).
- Image is a purposeful creation of a character of a person, phenomena or an object, which is designed to have an emotional-mental affect on someone, for popularity, advertising or reputation (Jackson, 2010).
- Image is an individual appearance that one shows to the external world (B.M. Stern, G. Zinkhan and A. Jaju, 2001).
- Image is a visual representation of an object or scene or person or abstraction produced on a surface (Random House Webster's Electronic Dictionary and Thesaurus, 1992).

Image has different definitions, but in any situation, it can have a set of common characteristics, which can help to understand this term deeper. Those characteristics are summarized in the Table 1.

*Table 1 Characteristics of an image*

<b>Characteristics of an image</b>	
Dynamism	Its attributes are modified in accordance with changes in media or in people's perceptions.
Activity	It is able to affect minds, emotions, activities and actions of separate individuals and groups of people.
Multifaceted	Image is a deep and multifaceted concept.
Image's artificial character	It is created for some reason, it is not a spontaneous process, rather it is a goal-oriented process.
Image is fragile	It is a fragile phenomenon.

Source: (Shri N. Palaniappan, 2009)



If those definitions are summarized in one, image can be defined as a result of mental representation of something or other objective phenomena; in the process of this presentation transformations of initial information are possible, and consequently image does not necessarily present real copy of a display; process of the image creation can be active and purposeful (for example art); this process can include procedure of the analysis and synthesis.

## *1.2 Types of Images*

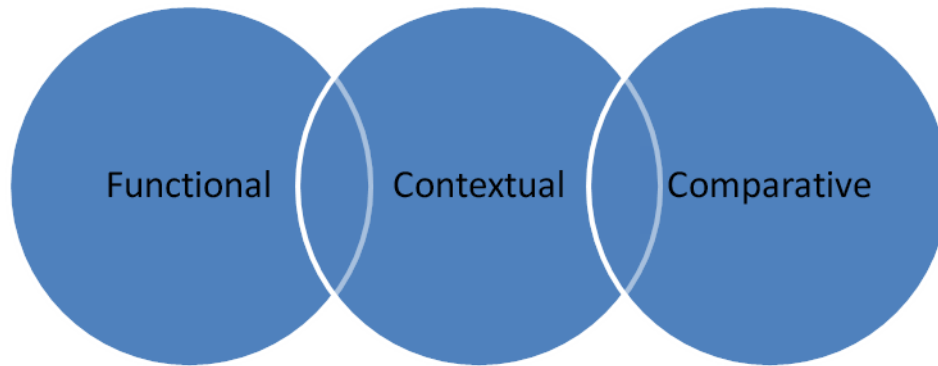
Term image has various types, based on which it has different definitions. Types of images can differ, because of their spheres, their methods of development, their context, etc. First of all image should be divided in two types: corporate and personal images. Corporate image refers to an entity or to an organization. It can be defined as "the way an organization is presented to or perceived by its members and the public" (Collins Dictionaries). Personal image refers to a politician, businesspersons, leader of a social movement, etc. It includes special characteristics of a concrete individual.

Both personal and corporate images can have two subtypes; those are external and internal images. The external image of a corporation is its representation, its perception, which is constructed in an external world by their clientele, suppliers, concurrent, media, different social groups, etc. While external image of a person is constructed from different forms of verbal, visual, ethical presentation and actions, while subjects here are individuals who enter into direct or indirect contact with them (B.M. Stern, G. Zinkhan and A. Jaju, 2001).

In an academic literature, three main approaches to the study of an image are defined. Based on those approaches types of images are defined and classified (See Chart 1).



*Chart 1*



By functional approach different images are being classified based on their different operations. Following types of images are defined by this approach:

- Specular: It is a self image. Individual sees himself/herself in a mirror, in order to understand and interpret his/her characteristics. This type of an image is primarily a positive one, because person always wants to present himself/herself in a preferable way.
- Actual: this image is typical for a look from outside, this how others see concrete person. Here is important not only to create a preferable image, but also to make it important and valuable for the politician. That is why during the development of the actual image PR specialist and media should be involved.
- Desired: It presents what person wants to achieve. It is can be considered as an ideal image or an image of a referent person with whom individual wants to be similar.
- Negative: That is an image which can be created by adversary, in order to affect reputation of a person or an organization (Shri N. Palaniappan, 2009).

According to the contextual approach an image should have a holistic and coherent nature, it should consider the conditions for the implementation and separate features should not contradict each other. This approach can also be called a professional approach, because it is an image of a concrete profession (D. Ohr and H.Oscarsson, 2003). For example if the profession of



a politician is considered then in a frames of an electoral campaign image can be classified by three main types: primary, secondary and ideal (See Chart 2). The cornerstone of this approach is the assessment that image should have an agreed character.

*Chart 2*



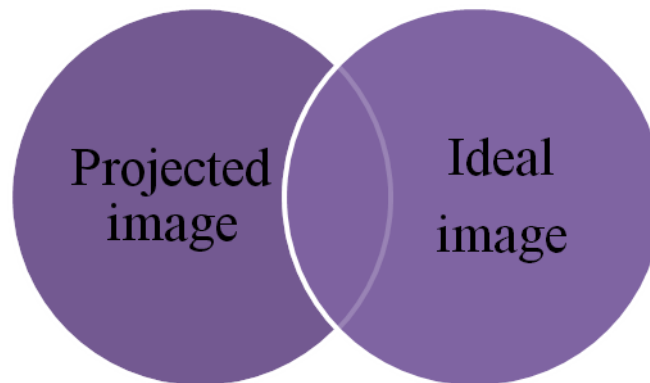
Image is a complex phenomenon, which includes and connects quite heterogeneous factors. All those factors should be considered, because individual perception takes place through different channels, and some work should be done on all those channels, in order to achieve a result.

### *1.3 Projected and Ideal Images of Political Leaders*

For the purposes of this paper the image of a political leader will be considered, mainly two dimensions of the image should be defined: those are projected and ideal images of political leaders (See chart 3).



*Chart 3*



While the ideal image of political leaders is the image existing in people's perceptions, their understanding of a good political leader. Every person can have his/her own notion of an ideal political leader, while a projected image is the one created by politicians and their PR specialists in order to present it to the public. It includes all traits they want to emphasize and consider as valuable and important. Projected and ideal images of political leaders may fully or partially correspond to each other, or be completely different (as it is shown in Chart 3). The current paper will present the projected and ideal images of Armenian political leaders and will show the connection between them, as well as will show the generalized picture of people's opinions on their ideal images.

As it has been demonstrated image is a complex and ambiguous term, which have several definitions. Different scholars define it in a different way, this trend can be connected with the fact that image has several types and its definitions can differ from one type to another. Next section of the paper will present types of images in order to make this picture clearer.



## ***Chapter 2: Political leadership and the Image of Political Leaders***

Leadership is a commonly used term, which is relevant for almost any discipline. In this chapter, focus is mainly on the political leadership and political leaders. Here definitions of political leadership and types of political leaders are presented here. Besides, the image of political leaders and the main ways of its analysis are mentioned here.

### ***2.1 Definitions of Leadership***

The term "leadership" has a long history, but it has not been clearly defined during all this time. Leadership was defined in different fields and from different perspectives and as a result it stays too broad and wide (Ver, 2008). Dubrin calculates approximately 35,000 definitions of leadership in scholarly literature (Laura Guerrero and Glenn Rowe , 2013). In order to understand the term "leadership" a person first should separate its characteristics and distinguish "real" leaders from “mere” managers or just persons who have any position. Scholars should be careful here and not be too radical by distinguishing between the "real" and the unsuccessful leaders, or between "bad" or "good", those terms are not preferable (Blondel, 1987). In order to make this term more clear various definitions of leadership will be summarized in the Table 2.



*Table 2 Definitions of Leadership*

Author	Year	Definition
<b>James Burns</b>	1978	“Leadership is a the reciprocal process of mobilizing, by persons with certain motives and values, various economic, political, and other resources, in a context of competition and conflict, in order to realize goals independently or mutually held by both leaders and followers” (Ver, 2008, p. 10).
<b>Gary Yukl</b>	2006	“Leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives” (Laura Guerrero and Glenn Rowe , 2013, p. 4).
<b>Warren Bennis</b>	2007	"Leadership is a function of knowing yourself, having a vision that is well communicated, building trust among colleagues, and taking effective action to realize your own leadership potential” (Bennis, 2007, p. 3).
<b>Peter G. Northouse</b>	2007	“Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (Northouse, 2009, p. 52).

All those definitions of leadership were summarized by Peter G. Northouse, he distinguished four common features, which appeared in almost all definitions of leadership. Those features are:

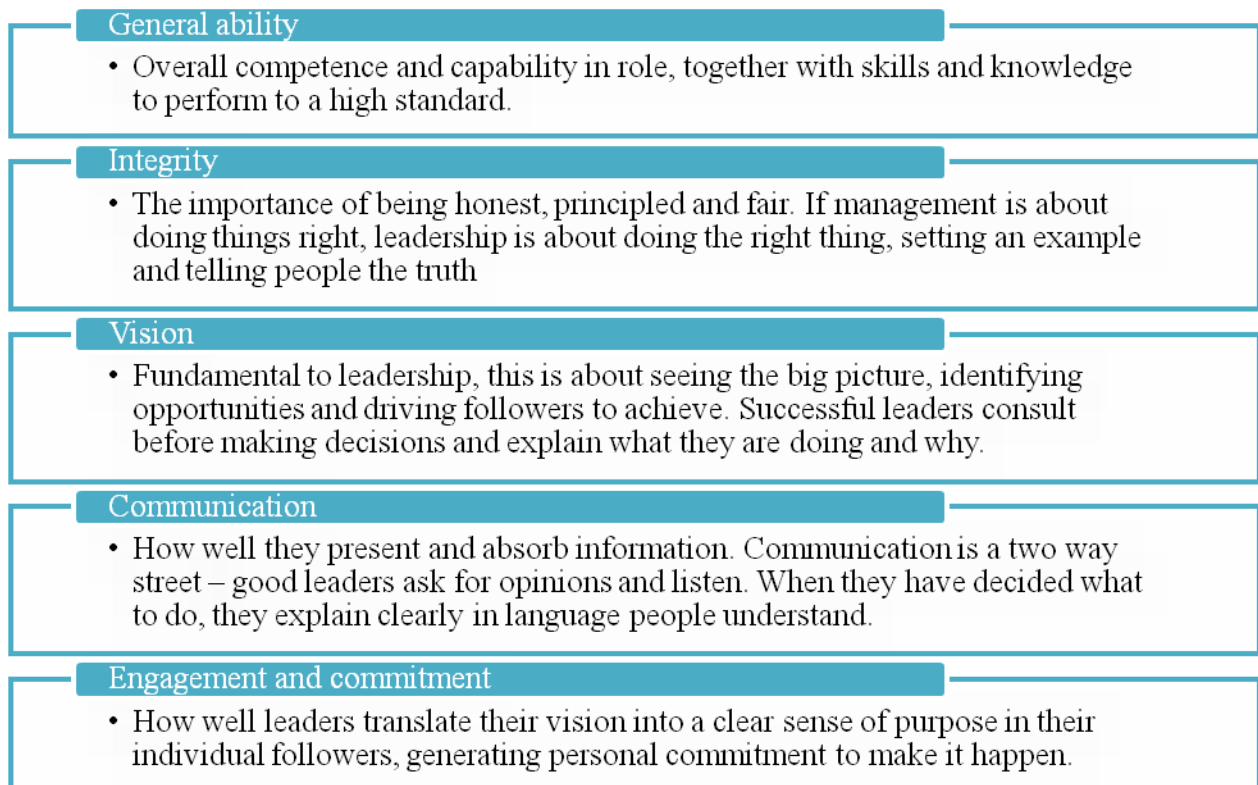
1. Leadership is a process
2. Leadership includes impact



3. Leadership is a group phenomenon
4. Leadership includes achievement of objectives (Northouse, 2009).

Even concerning that term leadership has multiple meanings, it still has several common features, which were presented previously. Institute of Leadership & Management went one step forward and distinguished five dimensions of leadership, which are summarized in the Chart 4.

*Chart 4. Five Dimensions of Leadership*



Source: (Institute of Leadership & Management, 2010, p. 5).

It can be concluded that leadership is a broad term, which includes different characteristics and as a result it stays too broad. But leadership is more clearly defined in narrow fields. Current paper will focus primarily on leadership from the perspective of political science.



## *2.2 Political Leadership*

Peele is one of the main authors who started to research leadership from the perspective of political science. She suggested more innovative methods and claimed the importance of communication between different fields, which study leadership. The trend in political science was that it was researching leadership mainly from the perspective of biographical stories, as it is common in Western literature (Peele, 2005). H. L. de Ver brings several examples of this approach, like "Clarke's (1991) comparative work on British leaders since Gladstone; Hennesy's (2001) account of the office of Prime Minister in Britain since the end of the Second World War; Seldon's (2007) recent assessment of Blair's leadership of Britain; Elgie (1995) on political leadership in liberal democracy; Kellerman's (1986) sourcebook on political leadership; Gormley-Heenan's (2006) study of political leadership during the Northern Ireland Peace Process; Neustadt's (1960) assessment of Presidential power in the US; and Gouldner's (1950) study of leadership and democracy" (Ver, 2008, p. 11).

Starting from 2000, new approaches on researching leadership have appeared and it becomes less concentrated on biographical stories and history. H. L. de Ver distinguishes following works: "Beall (2005), who looks at the relationship between traditional leadership figures and modern democracy in metropolitan South Africa; Bolden & Kirk (2005) address African leadership from an indigenous perspective, looking at the meanings and connotations that the concept of 'African Leadership' has for Africans; and van Wyk (2007) who looks at different conceptions of African leaders" (Ver, 2008, p. 11).

According to Joseph Masciulli, Mikhail A. Molchanov and W. Andy Knight leadership is an important feature of any government and in case of a weak leadership government will be



unable to accomplish its duties. The right and creative type of a leadership can contribute to the long-term prosperity of the government, and vice versa, if the country does not have a wise leader it probably would not succeed (Joseph Masciulli, Mikhail A. Molchanov and W. Andy Knight, 2009).

From the perspective of political science, a separate type of leadership is going to be observed, that is political leadership. Joseph Masciulli mentioned that political leadership is "a multidimensional phenomenon" (Joseph Masciulli, Mikhail A. Molchanov and W. Andy Knight, 2009, p. 2). According to the authors, political leadership is difficult to define clearly, because it depends on the social, cultural and economic situation of the current country. Even though authors suggested their definition of a political leadership: "Political leadership overlaps significantly with the higher levels of military, legal, organizational, and religious and ideological leadership, and is a special part of 'social leadership' in general, as we contended above" (Joseph Masciulli, Mikhail A. Molchanov and W. Andy Knight, 2009, p. 6).

Glenn Paige in his book defines political leadership as "a behaviour of person in position of political authority, their competitors and these both in interaction with other members of society as manifested in the past, present and probable future throughout the world" (Paige, 1976, p. 1). Another author Rost presents his own definition which he states is appropriate for a post-industrial period that carries with it contemporary challenges. Leadership, according to Rost, is "an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes" (Rost, 1991, p. 102). A deeper definition of political leadership was suggested by James MacGregor Burns, who claimed that political leadership in a democracy "is the reciprocal process of mobilizing, by persons with certain motives, various economic, political and other resources, in a context of competition and conflict, in order to realize goals



independently or mutually held by leaders and followers" (Burns, 1978, p. 23). As a result, one of the main objectives of a leader is to orient his/her followers for the achievement of their common goal.

Based on the various definitions of political leadership several scholars tried to develop common traits, which can present political leaders from the most preferable perspective. According to Hermann, seven traits are established which are predominantly helpful in defining political leadership style. These seven traits are: "(1) the belief that one can influence or control what happens, (2) the need for power and influence, (3) conceptual complexity (the ability to differentiate things and people in one's environment), (4) self-confidence, (5) the tendency to focus on problem solving and accomplishing something versus maintenance of the group and dealing with others' ideas and sensitivities, (6) an individual's general distrust or suspiciousness of others, and (7) the intensity with which a person holds an in group bias. These seven traits provide information that is relevant to assessing how political leaders "respond to the constraints in their environment, process information, and what motivates them to action" (Hermann, 2002, p. 14).

Traits play a vital role in the image creation of political leaders. For example, Barisione claimed that according to the widespread definition of image, any trait or characteristic that large portion of an electoral group personally relate with a leader is an essential part of his/her public image. This indicates that an image can be established both on factors belonging to the firmly personal aspect of a leader ('good-looking', 'smiles often', 'has a millionaire wife', 'is a football fan'), and on the firmly political one (such as "partisanship, ideological orientation, and positions on the basic policy issues"). "Depending on which elements the candidate emphasizes, and also



on which elements different types of voters perceive as most significant, a candidate's image will be an essentially personal image, or an essentially political one" (Barisione, 2009, p. 49).

As it has been already mentioned, opinions about an image of political leaders in the electorate often are visualized in a dichotomous way. Political leader's traits are thus frequently distinguished into "politically relevant" and "performance related" characteristics on the one hand and personal, non-political characteristics on the other hand. Politically relevant or performance related characteristics include characteristics such as leader's aptitude, leadership qualities, knowledge, or political integrity. Personal characteristics include a leader's looks, or his or her family life. Politically relevant characteristics have obviously established the most concentrated treatment in earlier research, with distinguished dimensions whereas the non-political measurement is either not quantified at all or only very generally (D. Oscarsson and H. Ohr , 2003). According to Barisione:

*"In cognitive and individual terms, the image of a leader or a candidate is the synthetic mental representation which the perceiver holds of him/her on the basis of those few traits or elements characterized by: a higher strength of the stimulus (or evidence ), a higher normative salience (or subjective relevance for the perceiver), and a higher accessibility (or ease by which such elements are recalled to memory)"* (Barisione, 2009, p. 48).

It becomes clear that traits of political leaders matter in modern politics, but the question is: What are the most important and attractive traits of political leaders? Different researchers have different answers to this question. If our assumptions in the evaluation of political leaders will be created based on Greenstein's 'skills approach', then it should be claimed that the actual precondition for all candidates can be their communicational ability (Barisione, 2009). According to this approach, a good leader should be a good communicator. While Funk



disagrees, according to him three distinguishable measurements are significant to cover the room of leader assessments, mainly "competence, trustworthiness (or integrity) and warmth or sociability" (D. Oscarsson and H. Ohr , 2003, p. 4).

Another study was conducted in Turkey by Islamoglu, Alniacik and Ozbek, which showed that the most significant personality trait for political leaders in Turkey is "knowledge". Honesty, reformism, democratic orientation and patriotism come after, concerning their significance stages defined by the respondents' evaluation (A. H. Islamoglu, U. Alniacik and V. Ozbek, 2007, p. 17). Another important characteristic for political leaders is charisma. It is proposed that charismatic leaders engage in impression managing methods in order to strengthen their "image of competence, increasing subordinate compliance and faith in them. Or it is reported that charismatic leaders can be distinguished from other leaders by their use of articulation and impression management practices to inspire followers in pursuit a vision" (Takala, 2005, p. 45). According to Tuomo Takala charismatic leader use power over his/her supporters, but also his/her supporters have power over the leader. Therefore, this connection is interactive by its character (Takala, 2005).

The type of a political leader can be defined based on his/her personal skills. In particular, different types of political leaders would have different set of characteristics. The next subchapter will present main types of political leaders.

### *2.3 Types of political leaders*

According to Blondel leadership is a behavioral term, so it should be defined from a behavioral and not from the positional perspective. Positional leader derives his/her power and authority from his/her position, while situation is not so clear when behavioral leadership is being defined. Author claimed, that "prima facie, leadership appears related to power: a leader



(in the behavioral sense) is a person who is able to modify the course of events" (Blondel, 1987, p. 15).

While Paul't Hart and John Uhr suggested their typology of political leaders, they distinguish following types of political leaders:

*"Political leaders are defined by power. At the other extreme, there are political leaders who embrace populism because that is the sure path to popular support and public power, regardless of what political doctrine to which they might have originally been attracted. In between, political leaders pursue the responsibilities of power with more or less acceptance of the burdens of public accountability"* (John Uhr and Paul Hart, 2008, p. 5).

A common typology of political leadership should mainly begin from the influence that the leaders have in their country and primarily on their society. This is a main point, on which scholars should focus. But here again one should not forget to clarify the main source of this power, they should distinguish power which is derived from persons position, from power which she/he obtains based on his/her personal traits (Blondel, 1987).

According to Nvard Melqonyan the two popular methods of political leader's self-presentation in Armenia can be suggested based on distinguishing characteristics of national history. Those self-presentation ways can distinguish between two types of leaders, which are the following:

1. National leader: He/she is the wise governor, savior and messiah, who is capable to renew the grand Armenian statehood and win back its admirable existence and "its place" amongst the other countries.



2. Communal leader: He/she is a kind of a political leader who has historically been advanced to up-to-date situations. This nature of a political leader matches with the category of “their own”, “brother” and “a good fellow”, "who accepts responsibility not for the nation or the country as a whole, but for the territory, community and clan entrusted to him" (Melkonyan, 2007, p. 53).

#### *2.4 Methods of Analysis*

In order to understand the ideal image of a political leader and to find out their ideal traits and characteristics, various researches were conducted all over the world. It is observable that different researchers usually applied different methodologies. The research in this field can be very difficult to conduct, mainly because very often political leaders cannot be easily accessed and as a result researchers have to find out more creative methodologies. For example, by analyzing the content of what political leaders tell, we can start to discover something about the images they exhibit in public even when such persons are unavailable for the more common assessment methods (Hermann, 2002). In David Winter's article, another method is presented; according to him, researchers can analyze the personalities of political leaders at a distance. Author defines content analysis of interviews, speeches and other political texts as the best method for this kind of research. Winter concludes that (1) Person can be objectively and reliably studied without direct access, for example through content analysis. (2) Personality is complex, according to the author we should not concentrate only on traits but also on motives and values of person. (3) Personality exists in context and contexts live on in personality, researcher should also understand the social context with which person interacts. (4) It is possible to predict political behavior from personality according to the author the behavior of political leader can be used to predict his future steps (Winter, 2005).



## *2.5 Image of political leaders*

Image of a political leader is a set of characteristics, which are developed in the mind of a society. It is a developed stereotype, which is used in political communication. It is important to indicate that the process of image creation is a goal oriented, rather than spontaneous one. According to Nimmo and Savage (1976) an image of a candidate can be defined as the voter's perception "... based on both the subjective knowledge possessed by voters and the messages projected by the candidates" (D. Oscarsson and H. Ohr , 2003, p. 3).

It is clear that political leaders can work on their image in order to achieve desired responses from their voters. According to Hermann, a main motive for that curiosity about the personal traits of political leaders is the understanding that their preferences, their beliefs, values, norms, and the methods of decision making can affect lives of citizens (Hermann, 2002). It is really important to understand that a trait of the political leader – for example charisma – depends not only on his/her probable 'real' characteristics, but also on the opinion of his/her supporters, on the public's reply, and on the mass consequences of this communication (Barisione, 2009). The importance of personality and personal traits for political leaders in modern society encouraged Barisione to define the concept of "valence Image". "Valence image" includes all those leadership-related perceived characteristics, which are both personal and politically relevant, as they permit deductions or estimations about the approach and quality of a candidate's performance as a political leader. Specifically, a valence image is grounded on three center building blocks: "the candidate's image traits (or perceived attributes, such as the 'personality traits' referred to by psychosocial research); his/her vision (or general projected view of country); and the image types (or overall profiles), which stem from a particular



combination of traits, vision, and other symbolic elements related to the candidate's public representation" (Barisione, 2009, pp. 42-43).

Image of political leaders is not a well-researched topic; as a result, different authors understand and define it in their special manner. Primarily can be mentioned N. Melkonyan's article, where she tries to find out the concept of ideal image through Armenian political advertisements. She presented two approaches of political leader's image perception, which are used in Armenian reality. According to the first one, a political leader must be a type of "superman" ("he is better than me"), who is capable to discover and propose creative resolutions to essential problems, an individual with outstanding intellectual abilities and strong will power. The second technique proposes that only the political leader, who is perceived by the citizens as "one of us", as a usual man with his own advantages and drawbacks, will achieve a popular support (Melkonyan, 2007).

## *2.6 Image creation of political leaders*

Usually an image of a politician is being defined in literature as an image of a winner, it shows the importance of an image in a nowadays politics. As a result, politicians should spend a part of their resources for the image creation. Image creation is a complex process, which should be conducted by specialists, if a person wants to achieve a tangible result. According to the literature, mainly two methods can be used in order to create ideal image, those techniques are: (1) political public relations and (2) political marketing. Political public relations can be defined as "the use of media outlets to communicate specific political interpretations of issues in hope of garnering public support" (Jackson, 2010, p. 18). Whilst recognizing the strategic exercise of media relations, Moloney and Colmer propose that political PR is a tactical instrument where parties employ policy, personality and presentation to increase voter attention (Jackson, 2010).



Continuing this theme, Brissenden and Moloney suggest that political PR acts as a trellis, and so can be a defensive strategy, hiding what parties do not want the media and public to know (K. Moloney and J. Brissenden , 2005).

While the second technique is a political marketing. Political marketing includes a whole set of methods that are employed to construct the party or the candidate sympathetic for the voters; to create the party or the candidate familiar for the majority of voters, and by every persons in these groups; to place the party or the candidates' differences ahead; and to achieve the essential number of votes with the minimum costs to win the elections (A. H. Islamoglu, U. Alniacik and V. Ozbek, 2007).

Consequently, by these methods politicians can create the desired image for themselves. For example, in order to demonstrate to broad public a positive, friendly and emotional image, political leaders initiated to present themselves surrounded by their family members - wives and children in a family friendly environment. As a result, private life of politicians becomes a part of "political package" (Kollmannova, 2011, p. 171). According to G.V. Caprara, et al:

*"We view basic personal values of the type studied here as expressions of personal ideologies that organize core political orientations. When politicians emphasize their commitment to "social justice" (universalism) or to "family values" (tradition and security), they are appealing to the basic values that shape individuals' attitudes toward specific ideological issues"* (G. V. Caprara, S. Schwartz, C. Capanna, M. Vecchione, and C. Barbaranelli, 2006, p. 24).

Image creation will be impossible without mass media, which transform all information to the wider public. When politician is not on TV and in newspapers, when he/she does not have speeches and presentations, he/she is just a civilian, who has political beliefs. Even if politician



does valuable work, but no one knows about it, it means, that he/she is out of politics. The connection between politics and media is indivisible. People rely on the media to obtain information and news about politics and similarly also the political and other elites rely on the media for information about people's views, in order to reach out to the people (Niemi, 2011). According to McAllister the electronic media have been seen as vital in creating the method that governments communicate with electorate and try to convert them; "at the same time, party leaders have exploited their exposure in the electronic media in order to attract votes" (McAllister, 2005, p. 7).

It can be concluded that crucial transformations are happening in the way in which election campaigns are performed and how politics is represented in the mass media of developed democracies. As a result, political communication had been converted into more personalized during the last years – at the expenditure of conceptual institutions such as political parties (D. Oscarsson and H. Ohr , 2003). Therefore, it can be concluded that nowadays politics becomes more personalized. Personalization appears to the fore because this term highlights the significance of a politician's character in today's politics. Personalization is a widely accepted process (McAllister, 2005), but there is no agreement on its precise definition (M. Almonkari and P. Isotalus, 2011). Adam and Maier recently reviewed earlier studies of personalization. According to them personalization implies two perspectives. Firstly, it refers to a stronger focus on candidates or politicians instead of parties, institutions, or issues. Secondly, it claims that it is not only individuals per se, but also their personal, non-political characteristics that assume greater relevance (M. Maier and A. Silke , 2010). Besides the personalization of politics includes two supposed procedures. First, the personalities of political leaders acquired a center place and started to be the focus of electorate's attention. Second, the personal characteristics of voters,



rather than their social positions in different interest groups, become crucial for political selection (G. V. Caprara, S. Schwartz, C. Capanna, M. Vecchione, and C. Barbaranelli, 2006).

As P. Isotalus and M. Almonkari mentioned:

*"The growing importance of a politician's persona concerns above all political leaders. It is evident that the personae and characteristics of political leaders are important factors for parties, voters, and the media. The party leaders are the most prominent figures in a campaign and when choosing a new leader the political parties pay much attention to the candidate's prominence. For voters, the leader and other key politicians of the party are important, and then they compare parties and make their voting decisions. The media are extremely interested in the leading politicians and report on political issues through the political leaders"* (M. Almonkari, P. Isotalus, 2011, p. 11).

Image creation includes five main features, which are: (1) positioning, (2) the rise of the image, (3) negative publicity or the reduction of an image, (4) competitive advantages, (5) counter advertising.

1. Positioning: It is a process of creation and maintenance of an image; it explains the existing issues to the voters. If object is not positioned, it will be difficult to understand for electorate. In politics, positioning can be defined as election or declaration of a candidacy. When person presents his /her candidacy, he/she is positioning. For example, his/her name is included in the list of registered candidates. Then this candidate should be presented to the wide public and the number of gained votes will mainly depend on how well he/she will be presented.



2. The rise of the image: When positioning is already finished, specialists should work in order to raise an image. When image is already developed, it should become more shaped.
3. Negative publicity or the reduction of an image: It is almost impossible in politics to have a very positive image, as his/her own traits can be used for a negative publicity. For example, this can be his/her appearance, age, voice, etc.
4. Competitive advantages: Generally, this step is a combination between raising your own image, by reducing your concurrent's image.
5. Counter advertising: The main goal of a politician is being elected, if he/she wants to gain votes he/she should has a positive image. However, the case is that a negative image for one politician can be a positive for another one (McAllister, 2005).

It can be concluded that political leaders and the development of their images are increasingly valuable for the purposes of this study, because the theoretical implications presented above will serve as a bases for this research.



### ***Chapter 3: Research Methodology***

The following research questions and hypothesis were formulated for this study.

#### **Research questions:**

1. What is the ideal image of political leaders in Armenia?
  - 1.1. What are the main stereotypes associated with the ideal political leader?
  - 1.2. What are the main characteristics of ideal political leader?
    - (a) What is the preferred gender of political leader?
    - (b) What is the preferred age of political leader?
    - (c) What is the preferred appearance of political leader?
    - (d) What is the preferred character of political leader?
2. What is the projected image of political leaders in Armenia?
  - 2.1. What are the main stereotypes underlined by political leaders?
  - 2.2. What are the main underlined characteristics of political leaders in Armenia?
3. What is the outcome of comparison between ideal and the projected images of political leaders?
  - 3.1. What are the differences between projected and ideal images of political leaders?
  - 3.2. What are the similarities between projected and ideal images of political leaders?

#### **Hypothesis**

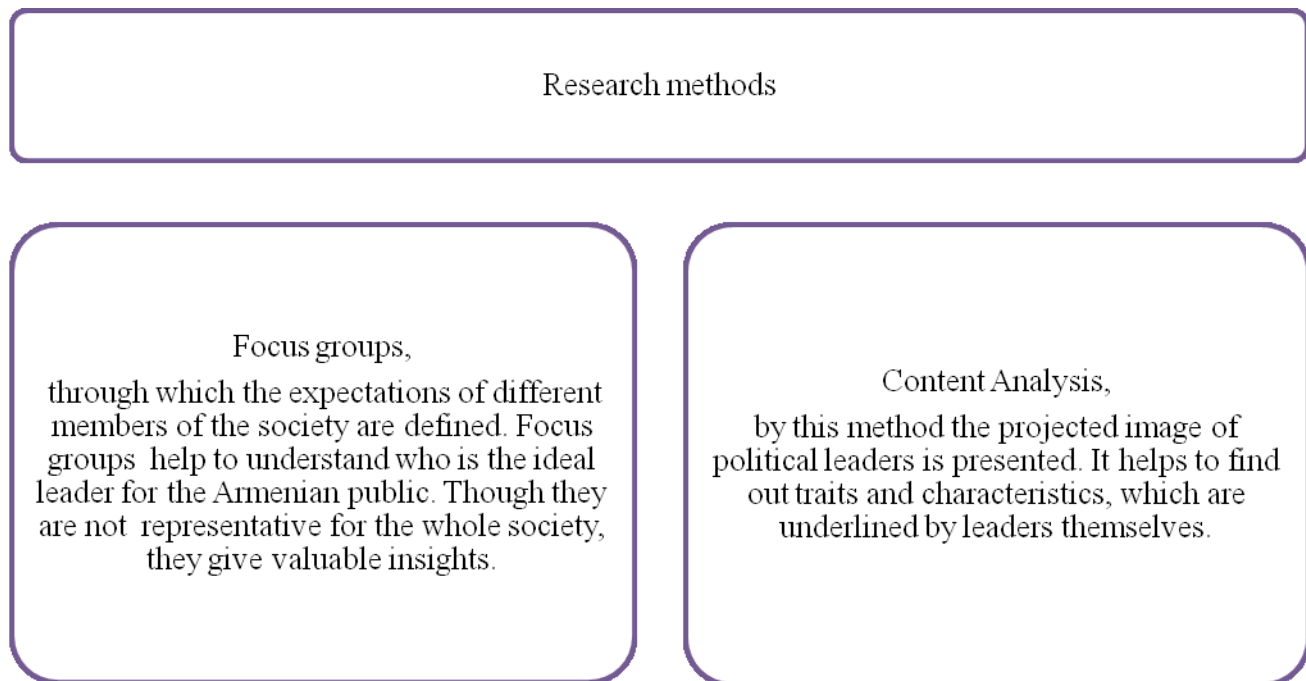
H1: The image of ideal political leaders differs from their projected image in the Armenian society.



H0: The image of ideal political leaders does not differ from their projected image in the Armenian society.

### Methodology

Current research concentrates on the image of ideal political leader, which is created by media and other sources of information and the level of coincide between those projected and ideal images. Two main research methods were used during this research.



Respondents for focus groups were chosen based on two parameters. Table 3 shows those parameters. During current research, three focus groups were conducted. Groups were composed with an aim of equally representing gender and age of participants. Focus groups took from 50 minutes to one hour. All three focus groups were audio recorded for future analysis.



*Table 3 Characteristics of FG participants*

Age		18-30	31-45	46 and higher
Gender	M	2	2	2
	F	2	2	2

Concerning content analysis, three main sources were analyzed. Those sources are the following:

- Official web sites of presidential candidates
- Electoral platforms
- Biographical movies

Content analysis was used in order to find out what are the main characteristics and features on which political leaders focused and to identify the projected images of political leaders. It should be mentioned that only two candidates' political images were studied within the course of this research project: they are Serzh Sargsyan and Raffi Hovannisian. The idea of choosing only these two candidates is that they are more prominent candidates, who have more chances to win according to statistics. In particular, according to an opinion poll by Gallup International done in January 2013, 68 percent of respondents would vote for Serzh Sargsyan, while for Raffi Hovannisian 24 percent was predicted.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/02/sorting-through-armenias-contested-election/273359/>



Firstly Serzh Sargsyan's and Raffi Hovannisian's official web sites were analyzed, those sources were chosen because they were fully controlled by candidates and all the information presented there is the one which they want to be associated with them.<sup>2</sup>

Besides the electoral platforms of candidates were analyzed. The main issues on which they concentrate can influence their image creation process. Primarily candidates show their support to some parts of the society and advocate for several policies, all these entire features create the image of a political leader.

In addition, the third analyzed source was their biographical movies. These movies were produced and shown during the electoral campaign. The main objective of these movies was to presents candidates images from the best side.

The categories based on which content analysis was conducted are summarized in the Appendix 2 and 3 (See Appendixes).

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<sup>2</sup> Analyzed web sites were <http://www.raffi4president.am/> and <http://www.serzhsargsyan.am/>



## ***Chapter 4 Results of Focus Groups and Content Analysis***

This chapter has two main parts; one is dedicated to the focus group results, while another one is devoted to the content analysis. The last part will be a comparison between results of focus groups and content analysis.

### ***4.1 Focus Group Results***

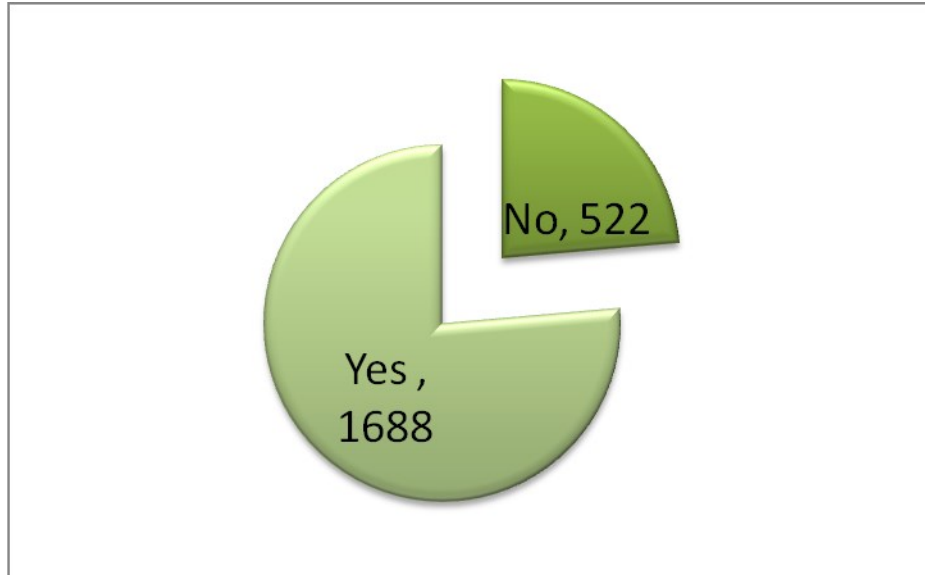
Focus groups were conducted to find out perceptions about ideal political leaders for Armenian society. Focus groups' results gave answers to several questions, as: What is the ideal image of political leaders in Armenia? What are the main stereotypes and characteristics associated with the ideal political leader? What are the preferred gender, age, appearance and character of political leader? Besides, during focus groups the images of Armenian and international political leaders were discussed, in order to find out a type of an ideal political leader in real political arena.

#### ***Preferred Gender***

Is an ideal political leader for Armenians men or a woman? These questions do not have a clear cut answer. Mainly respondents present their opinion toward female political leaders as positive. Primarily all of them mentioned that they would vote for a women candidate in presidential elections, this trend can be also observed based on the Caucasus Barometer's data (see Chart 5).



**Chart 5. Would you vote for a women candidate in presidential elections? <sup>3</sup>**



*Source: Caucasus Barometer, 2011*

According to the CB survey's results, the majority of respondents (1688) answered that they would vote for a women candidate in presidential elections, while only 522 people answered no to this question. The notion from focus groups was almost the same; people show their willingness to vote for a women candidate. However that was only the first impression, while analyzing deeper it was found out that Armenians would prefer to have a male President. Some of the quotes illustrating this preference are: *"Male President looks more reliable and strong, while women can change her opinion about the same thing several times"* (Female, 30), *"In some areas women are better to lead, but in other areas, men are better to lead, in my opinion Presidency is closer for a man, rather than for a woman"* (Male, 24), *"Women tend to rely more on emotion and men tend to depend on reason. That is why men president can be more rational and practical"* (Female, 33).

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<sup>3</sup> CRRC 2011



### *Preferred age*

Another issue that was researched during this study was the ideal age for a political leader. Initially there was no differentiation between different types of political leaders, but it became clear that the ideal age for a political leader differ from one type to another. Primarily this separation can be presented based on the difference between ideal ages for party leaders and President.

According to the focus groups' respondents, party leader can be younger than a President. Based on their summarized responses the ideal age for a party leader is starting from 30, while a President should be older, mainly he/she should not be younger than 45. The main reason for this separation was the idea that an older person is more experienced; as a result he/she would be more skilled and wise. Some quotes which support this perspective are presented: *"President should be a person with life experience and who can govern not only based on his learned skills"* (Female, 27), *"Knowledge comes with age, the older you get, the smarter you get"* (Female, 45), *"As life experience grows, and we face different challenges, as a result we become more mature"* (Female, 24), *"Based on the knowledge of the past we are accommodating what comes up in the present, consequently we are more prepared for future challenges. So old President would be familiar with various life situations and will know how to act"* (Male, 35).

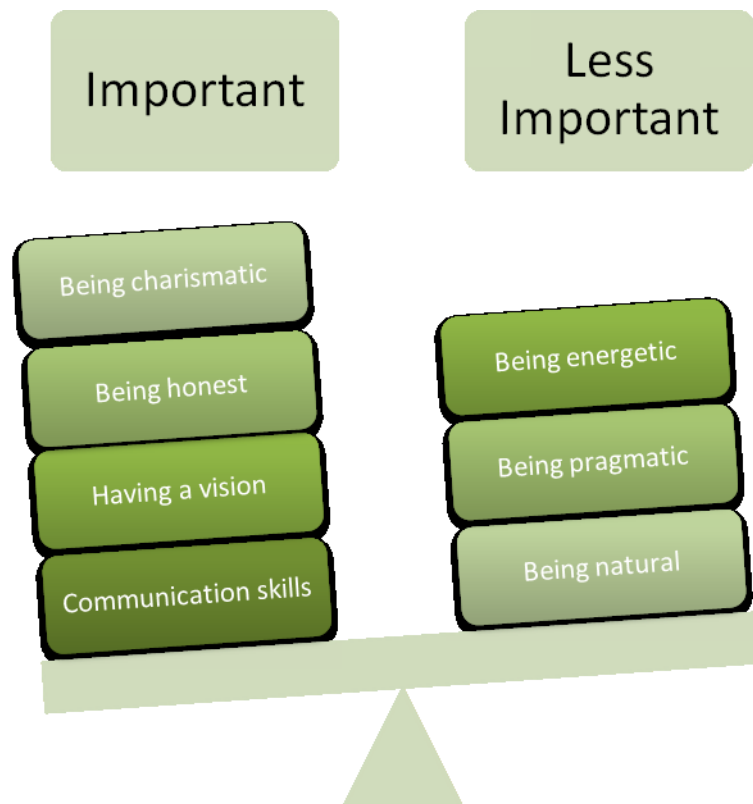
### *Preferred characteristics*

What are the main characteristics associated with the ideal political leader? It is predictable that every individual can have his or her perception of an ideal political leader, but there are some similarities in almost all cases. Chart 6 summarizes the most important and less important traits of political leaders as expressed by focus group participants (see Chart 6). There



was no question about less important traits; however, characteristics listed on the right side of this chart were mentioned less frequently.

*Chart 6: Most important and less important traits of political leaders*



Based on the focus groups' results the most important traits, which every political leader should have, are charisma, honesty, vision and communication skills, while being energetic, being pragmatic and being natural are less important.

According to respondents, the most important trait for a political leader is charisma; it was mentioned during almost all focus groups. Charisma is an umbrella term, which includes different characteristics and features of a person. Primarily it includes attractiveness, charm, talent, ability to influence, etc. Charisma is absolutely based on the personal characteristics of a



leader, it does not include his/her skills and experience in a political arena. Charisma is a general term, which was defined during focus groups, some citations are presented here: *"Charisma includes appearance, rhetorical skills, charm, but the most important is that they should be able to gain followers' trust and influence them to follow"* (Male, 19), *"Any charismatic person should be attractive for other people"* (Male, 30), *"Charisma makes a person extraordinary, it separates him/her from other members of society"* (Female, 25), *"Charisma includes those personal characteristics of a leader, which inspire loyalty of his/her followers and supporters"* (Female, 18).

Another trait, which was not less important and was mentioned frequently during focus groups, was honesty. According to focus groups' ideal political leader should be honest and fair. Electoral group is willing to trust their votes to the candidate only if this candidate will be honest with them. Respondents considered dishonesty as a worst characteristic, which any political leader may have. Primarily they mentioned: *"We are living in a world where telling a lie is something natural, it is not right any person should try to be honest, it becomes more important when we are speaking about political leaders"* (Female, 46), *"The majority of problems in our country come from the dishonesty of political leaders"* (Male, 30), *"I would never trust a person who is not honest, neither in face to face communication, nor in a political arena"* (Female, 19).

Having a vision can be distinguished as a third important characteristic: a vision for a future of a country and its future developments. As it became clear from focus group results this vision is strongly connected with the electoral programs of candidates, because it is a place where this vision can be clearly defined. Electoral platforms include and underline all those areas that candidates consider as important, besides it presents their methods for the future development of those considered areas. According to focus group respondents, a vision should



be clearly defined, and it is more reliable when the whole process of development is presented in detail. Concerning a vision following quotes are presented: *"Political leader can be consider as good, only if he/she has a clear approach for transforming political visions into reality"* (Female, 46), *"When there is no vision of future it becomes hard or even impossible to support any political party or a leader"* (Male, 19), *"Being an ideal political leader means developing a common mission and vision with the society you guide, and representing it persistently"* (Male, 30), *"People will follow a leader who presents a common goal, which is shared by almost everyone in the society, only this kind of vision can group people for the achievement of an objective"* (Female, 34).

Communication skills were also mentioned frequently during focus groups. According to respondents, ideal leader should not only be a good speaker, but he/she also should ask and listen to his/her electoral group's needs and necessities. An ideal political leader set the well-being of their electorate before their own personal interest. For this very reason an ideal political leaders should listen before speaking and have the capability to distinguish and prioritize. Political leaders can delegate the majority of their responsibilities to their representatives, but there is a responsibility, which they have to accomplish by themselves: it is public speaking. That is why communications skills are one of the most important traits for any political leader. It becomes clear that communication skills for Armenian society include two dimensions, from one side political leader should be a good speaker, with excellent rhetorical skills, from other side he/she should be a person who listen to the needs of the society. Various citations can be presented: *"One of the best methods to influence others is listening to their story. If person will believe that you are interested in his/her problems, they will be more willing to listen to you and to support you"* (Male, 30), *"A good leader should be a good speaker, who can attract masses by his/her*



*speeches, you should never underestimate the value of a word" (Female, 19), "Ideal leaders should not only create preferable ideas, but they also should be skillful enough to place those ideas in a way that others would accept them. So good leadership skills are based on the capacity to communicate information and opinions to the electoral group" (Female, 46).*

*Ideal political leader in international or domestic politics*

It is predictable that an ideal political leader who was presented by Armenian people during focus groups can be an invented character with no real bases. Nevertheless, during focus groups respondents were asked to present any political leader (international or domestic) who is close to their understanding of ideal political leader and to explain their answers.

The main trend was that the majority of respondents mentioned that there is no political leader nowadays who can be considered as ideal one. However, they mentioned that there are some political leaders of past and present who have traits and characteristics which make them closer to this ideal image. Various political leaders were mentioned, Table 4 is sorted according to frequency of mentioning. Different traits were associated with these political leaders, but only those mentioned most frequently are presented.



Table 4 Political leaders and their valuable traits

Name	Traits	Quotes from focus groups
<b>Barack Obama</b>	Fairness	<i>"He is a good President, because he treats everyone with equality, regardless of their race, gender or social status" (FG 1, F 46).</i>
<b>Abraham Lincoln</b>	Having principles	<i>"He was a person with strong beliefs and principles, which were not changing because of the situations or circumstances. These characteristics were influencing his followers to be loyal" (FG 1, M. 30).</i>
<b>1</b>	Strength of character	<i>"Mahatma Gandhi had a strong character. He kept himself away from the materialistic wants, he favored the truth and fairness, he was against violence, he always put society's well being at first place" (FG 3, F 24).</i>
<b>Winston Churchill</b>	Courage	<i>"Winston Churchill was a man of huge courage, he was sure that he was doing a right thing in a right way" (FG 1, M 24).</i>
<b>Nelson Mandela</b>	Having Integrity	<i>"Mandela is a man of great personal power and integrity, he was fighting for the freedom of an entire nation. He was a person who was able to group together black and white people of South Africa" (FG 3, F 19).</i>
<b>Margaret Thatcher</b>	Being decisive	<i>"She showed that a woman could be a decisive leader, she did never doubt her decisions, because she judged as absolutely right. If leader is not sure in his/her decision, how can people follow them?" (FG 1, F 33).</i>



#### *4.2. Content Analysis Results*

For Armenians the year 2013 was full of political events, mainly because of the Presidential elections. During these elections, seven candidates run for the Presidency. Through the content analysis, the projected image of this Presidential election's candidates will be presented. Two candidates' images were analyzed; those candidates are Raffi Hovhannisian and Serzh Sargsyan. Their projected images derived from content analysis are presented below. The results of content analysis of sources permit to distinguish and classify the functional positions the political leaders occupied in the process of self-presenting, as well as to describe their images.

##### ***Raffi Hovhannisian***

In presidential elections, Raffi Hovhannisian nominated himself as an independent candidate. Being the founder of the "Heritage" party, he presented himself as an independent candidate. He preferred not to be related to the "Heritage" party and as a result develop an image of an independent and free person.

From the perspective of a leadership style Raffi Hovhannisian employed characteristics of a behavioral leader. Behavioral leaders place emphasis on their actions, rather than on their positions. He presents himself as a person who is able to change a current situation in Armenia, because he is educated and skillful enough. That is why candidate's education in the University of California, in the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy; and in the Georgetown University Law Center had a central role during his electoral campaign. A huge part of his biography in his web site was primarily devoted to his education. His knowledge was presented as an evidence of his political abilities.



At the same time Raffi Hovannisian was creating an image of an ordinary person as "one of us", as a man with his own strong and weak sides in order to enjoy popular support. For example the candidate's habitual appearance (jeans, scarf with Armenian flag, etc), contributes to the image of "one of us".

Those two dimensions of Raffi Hovannisian's image can be in a conflict with each other. Because claiming from one side that he is a highly educated person, and from the other side that he is an ordinary person can bring to misunderstanding.

Still the central part of his image was this myth of an ordinary person. It became even clearer when elections were over. When Raffi Hovannisian started his strike on the Freedom Square, it presented his connection with the Armenian society. So as a result not only by using mass media, Raffi Hovannisian has practically made an illusion of direct contact between him and his potential electorate. His followers can come to the Freedom Square to meet their leader, to ask him questions and the most important to welcome him. Welcoming became an essential part of Raffi Hovannisian's image, it even affected the naming of his Revaluation, people started to call it "BaRevolution".

Raffi Hovannisian was clearly presenting himself as a representative of opposition, primarily the fact that he was standing in opposition to each of Armenia's three Presidents was underlined. As any opposition leader, he was suggesting a change. It can also be observed by the slogan that he employed: "It is possible".<sup>4</sup> It is interesting that the suggestion was a change and it is not clear will this change have a positive or a negative result. Primarily the case is that in the website and in his presidential platform, the word progress was mentioned only once, while in comparison "change" was mentioned almost 40 times. The context varies; it focuses on the changes in different parts of constitution and legal system, as well as on the changes in the well-

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<sup>4</sup> Հնարավոր է



being of the Armenian society. Some quotes from the electoral platform can be mentioned: "Nowadays Armenia stands on the verge of a crucial change. We can live in the old way, or in a new one",<sup>5</sup> "Our country needs fast and systemic changes like air and water, moreover changes today and not tomorrow, by visible actions and results, and not words".<sup>6</sup>

Another characteristic on which Raffi Hovannisian's image is based is heroism. In his "heroic" image, he is distinguished by raising the Armenian flag at United Nations headquarters in New York; championing national and state interests of Armenia across the world. However, the most important one was that he traveled to Turkey to speak, for the first time in that country's history, about the Armenian Genocide. His speech was an unordinary step; he raised an old issue on the new stage. This case had a special part in his biographical movie too, it was mentioned several times, but mainly this action was presented as heroic one by Raffi Hovannisian's daughter in his movie.

Being a part of Armenian Diaspora, Raffi Hovannisian tried to show his national identity. Primarily during the development of his image, the fact that he returned to Armenia as a volunteer after the Spitak earthquake was widely used. Besides, it was underlined that his being a part of a Diaspora had contributed to his political skills, primarily as the first minister of foreign affairs of the new republic, he established diplomatic relations with more than a hundred governments.

Raffi Hovannisian's vision and the most important features of this presidential campaign are summarized in his mission. This is the following:

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<sup>5</sup> Հայաստանն այսօր վերստին գտնվում է բախտորոշ փոփոխությունների շեմին. կամ ապրել հին ձևով, կամ բերել Նոր Հայաստանը:

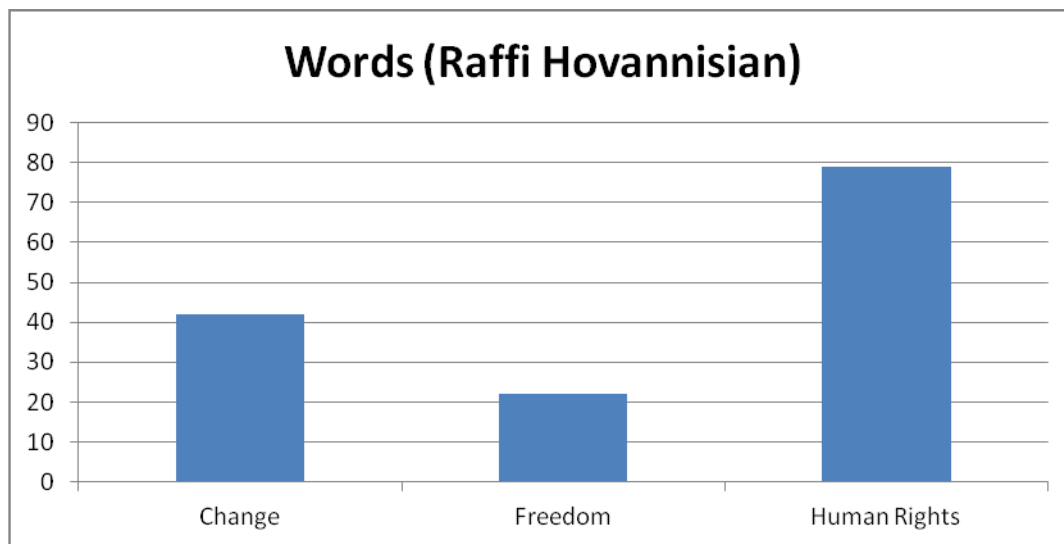
<sup>6</sup> Մեր երկրին օդ ու ջրի նման անհրաժեշտ են արագ, համակարգային փոփոխություններ, ընդ որում՝ փոփոխություններ այսօր եւ ոչ թե վաղը, տեսանելի գործերով ու արդյունքներով, եւ ոչ թե խոսքերով:



*"Contested the presidency of the Republic of Armenia, on mission to establish a true constitutional republic; to create hundreds of thousands of new jobs; to defeat corruption; to develop a foreign policy befitting a sovereign nation; to stop the devastating exodus and to realize the Great Return of all Armenians to a free, independent, and united homeland".<sup>7</sup>*

Based on the content analysis top three words, which were appearing in all sources most frequently and top three traits, which mainly have framed candidates image were distinguished. Chart 7 presents Top 3 words, with their frequencies, while Chart 8 presents Top 3 traits of Raffi Hovannisian's image. While the whole list of key words with frequencies are presented in the Appendix 4.

*Chart 7: Top Three Words (Raffi Hovannisian)*



The most frequent category was human rights; it was founded in the all three sources almost 80 times. Raffi Hovannisian claimed the importance of creating a country where

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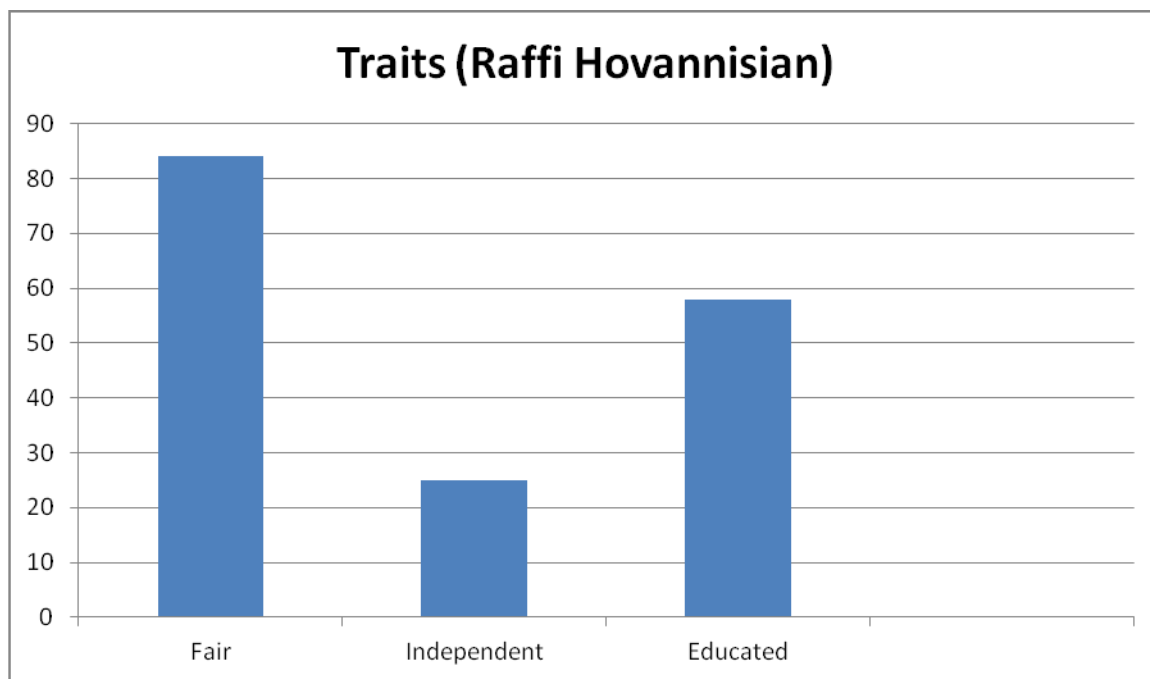
<sup>7</sup> <http://www.raffi4president.am/>



fundamental human rights would be respected. According to him national interest are strongly related to the rights of citizens, that is why it turns to be more valuable and important.

The third frequent word that was mentioned in text almost 25 times was "freedom". Raffi Hovannisian suggested that only free citizens could create a free country. According to his perspective, the freedom of citizens will develop in the freedom of a country. Nevertheless, a part of his electoral platform is called “Free and Secured citizen”.<sup>8</sup> From this viewpoint, the choice of a Freedom Square as a place for demonstrations is understandable, because it shows the love of freedom.

*Chart 8: Top Three Traits (Raffi Hovannisian)*



The main Raffi Hovannisian's traits, which were underlined in all three sources, are being fair, being independent and educated. Fairness was the most frequent trait, which was mentioned almost 90 times. Raffi Hovannisian presents himself as a fair person who will treat all citizens in

<sup>8</sup> Ազատ ու պետության կողմից պաշտպանված քաղաքացի



the same way. In particular, because of his fairness Armenia should become a more fair country, which will finally overcome all its issues, primarily ones connected with corruption.

The second trait was education, which had been already discussed; it was mentioned in all sources more than 55 times. He does not only present himself as an educated person, but also he claims the importance of education, primarily he has a separate part in his electoral platform, which is devoted to education.<sup>9</sup> While the third trait is being independent, this is strongly connected with the importance of freedom. Raffi Hovannisian was presented as an independent representative of an independent country.

### ***Serzh Sargsyan***

The ruling president of the Republic of Armenia ran for the second term. Quite a large diversity of methods was applied in the process of the electoral struggle for political image creation. Serzh Sargsyan was exploiting the myth of a leader, who was aware of all the issues of society not just by rumor, and was prepared and on the way of finding solutions to all of them. It was highlighted in every possible way that Serzh Sargsyan is experienced in all the fields of social life in Armenia.

As a result, he tried to create an image of "leader-politician", who is not only well informed concerning all the issues in the country, but also makes every effort to resolve these problems. Serzh Sargsyan has long lasting relations with security issues of Armenia. From 1999 to 2007, he was the Secretary of the Republic of Armenia National Security Council led by the President. From 2000 to 2007, he was the Republic of Armenia Minister of Defense.<sup>10</sup> Considering it and the Nagorno Karabakh conflict as a threat for Armenia, it is not surprising

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<sup>9</sup> Որակյալ ու մատչելի կրթության ապահովում

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.president.am/en/serzh-sargsyan/>



that security turned to be a crucial point in his presidential platform. The image of person who tried to secure Armenia is affirmed by the slogan: ‘Toward Safer Armenia’.<sup>11</sup>

During his image creation, Serzh Sargsyan emphasizes in all possible ways that he is different from others. He presents himself as a person who is talented enough to discover and present unusual solutions to essential issues, an individual with outstanding intellectual capabilities and strong will power. Primarily this image is based on his career in the government of the Republic of Armenian and the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic.

Serzh Sargsyan clearly presented that he had a vision of a better future for Armenia. He claimed that he was working for the development of a better Armenia, and he would continue this process. It was mentioned in the website: "We are united by the idea that we might be in a much better, more just, freer and more prosperous Armenia. We have no alternative, but to continue to build that Armenia".<sup>12</sup>

He was claiming the importance of stability by presenting changes as a possible threat for security. According to him, Armenia is on the right path and it should continue its way. He was assuring that in 2018 we would live in a better Armenia than now. With a vision of a better future, Serzh Sargsyan tried to claim that Armenia is only half way to its full development.

Based on the content analysis top three words, which were appearing in all sources most frequently and top three traits, which mainly have framed candidates image were distinguished. Chart 9 presents Top three words, with their frequencies, while Chart 10 presents Top three traits of Serzh Sargsyan's image. While the whole list of key words with frequencies is presented in the Appendix 5.

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<sup>11</sup> ԴԵՊԻ ԱՊԱՀՈՎ ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆ

<sup>12</sup> Մեզ միավորում է այն գաղափարը, որ Հայաստանը կարող է լինել շատ ավելի լավը, շատ ավելի արդար, շատ ավելի ազատ և շատ ավելի բարեկեցիկ: Այլընտրանք չունենք, ուղղակի պետք է շարունակենք կառուցել այդ Հայաստանը:



The most frequent word was security, importance of which had been already discussed. The second category was nation, which was mentioned almost 30 times. In particular, term "nation" was used as a substitute to the country or society. Serzh Sargsyan tried to appeal to national identity. Besides, security and nation were connected, mainly because Serzh Sargsyan was mainly underlining the importance of national security. His electoral platform mentioned: “We will steadily continue expanding the security framework with a view to boosting the level of security for citizens, families, the nation and the state”.

*Chart 9 Top Three Words (Serzh Sargsyan)*



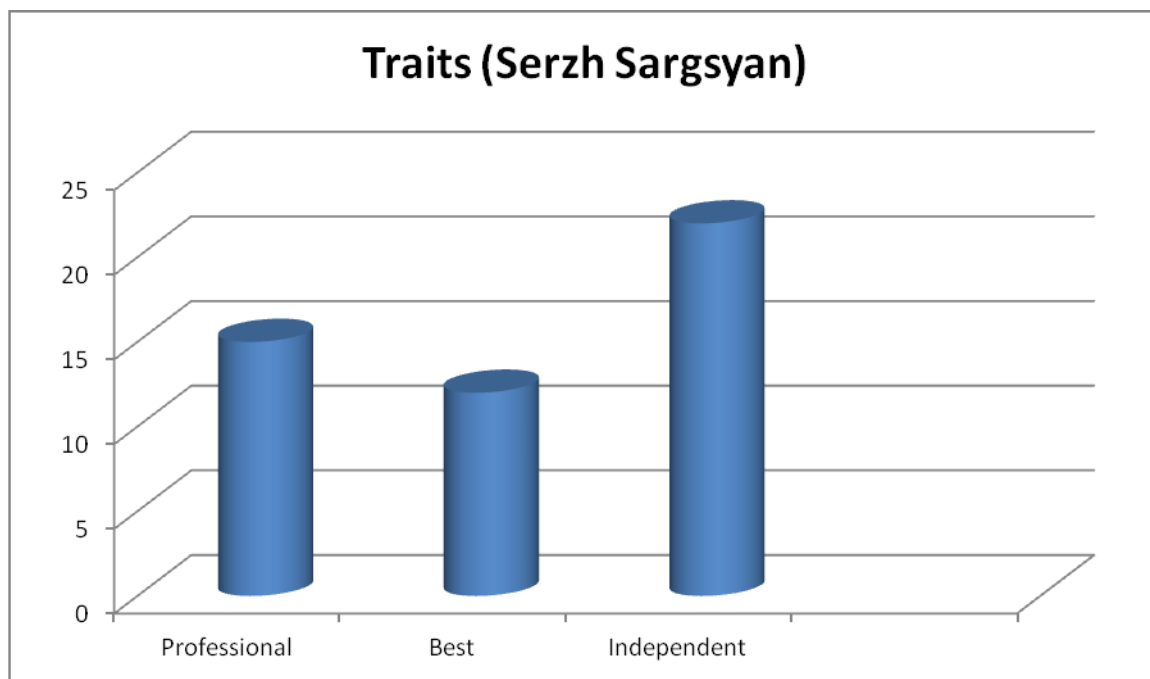
The third word was law, which was mentioned 17 times. He claimed the importance of legal framework, rather than unregulated actions. The main context, where it appears, is the claim that Armenian laws and regulations are the main guarantors of the development of the country.



Being independent was also one of the main traits underlined by Serzh Sargsyan. As in Raffi Hovannisian's case here, again candidate was presented as an independent representative of an independent country.

The second trait was professionalism, which was mentioned almost 15 times. Serzh Sargsyan is a candidate with a wealthy past experience in the field of politics, he hold different positions in government. Considering his professionalism, he was presenting himself as a best person for the position of a President.

*Chart 10 Top Three Traits (Serzh Sargsyan)*



#### *Comparison between Raffi Hovannisian's and Serzh Sargsyan's projected images*

Based on the presented results it can be concluded that Raffi Hovannisian's and Serzh Sargsyan's projected images differ from each other. On the one hand, Raffi Hovannisian is educated, smart and skilled in governing, and on the other hand, he uses the strategy of "I'm one of you", he presents himself as an ordinary person. At that, if in case of Serzh Sargsyan's image



there is no conflict between these two strategies of self-presentation, as the image of "the practical man" already suggests combination of these two images, in case of Raffi Hovannisian, the conflict is quite possible.

Being an experienced leader and a person with a position Serzh Sargsyan employed a strategy of a positional leadership, while Raffi Hovannisian presented himself as a behavioral leader, with important skills to make a change. Chart 11 summarizes the main differences between these candidates' projected images.

*Chart 11 Projected images of Raffi Hovannisian and Serzh Sargsyan*





#### *4.3 Comparison between results of focus groups and content analysis*

According to the research hypothesis, the image of ideal political leaders differs from their projected image in the Armenian society. Based on the results of focus groups and content analysis the hypothesis will be discussed here, mainly the differences and similarities between ideal and projected images of political leaders will be presented. For the respondent of focus groups the ideal President is a man older than 45. Both candidates correspond to these characteristics.

However, not all characteristics that are preferred by respondents are common for these candidates. In particular, according to focus groups results the most important traits are charisma, honesty, vision and communication skills, while Raffi Hovannisian's projected image is based on his honesty and communication skills, Serzh Sargsyan's projected image underlines his vision and professionalism. Both candidates were unsuccessful in presenting themselves as charismatic leaders, because their images were not fully corresponding to the definition of charisma. Primarily, both candidates were mainly underlying their professionalism and education, rather than personal skills, which can be associated with charisma.

Consequently, respondents consider as a positive and valuable these ideal characteristics. Here are presented quotes from focus groups concerning Raffi Hovannisian's image: *"He is an educated and honest man, who has a lot of innovative ideas to realize"* (Female, 22), *"Raffi is willing to communicate, he wants to listen to the Armenian society"* (Male, 33), *"Raffi Hovannisian is against corruption, he fights for the establishment of human rights, he cares about his people"* (Female, 19). These quotes show that the respondents valued traits, which were mostly underlined by political leader. While negative responses were the following: *"He is*



*not as much experienced as our current president” (Male, 24), “He is too ordinary, I do not think that he can be a successful President” (Female, 45).*

Concerning Serzh Sargsyan image the highest value for respondents has his experience, education and a vision. He presented himself as an extraordinary and well informed person, who can manage all current problems which existing in Armenia. Main positive opinions from focus groups are: *“He is clever and his experience will support him during his Presidency” (Male, 47), “May be he is not the best, but at least no one will be ashamed to see him representing our country on international arena” (Female, 32).* While negative ones were: *“He thinks that he is the best, he did not try to communicate with the society and to understand their problems” (Male, 37), “He was not able to make positive changes in Armenia during his Presidency, I do not think that he should have a second chance” (Male, 22).*

It can be concluded that the traits, which were underlined by political leaders had an impact on voters. Primarily they consider these characteristics as positive ones. Consequently, neither Raffi Hovannisian, nor Serzh Sargsyan have been able to make their projected images close to the ideal one, but at the same time their projected images have several features which are highly valued by the electoral groups.



## ***Conclusion***

With the development of different types of mass media, the importance of an image of political leaders has increased. An image is the main distinguishing feature between different political leaders. It is important for political leader's self-representation and can contribute to an increase of their votes, because people elect their representatives not only based on their promises, but also because of their personal images.

The current paper indicates that there are some similarities and differences between ideal and projected images of political leaders. While charisma, honesty, communication skills and clear vision of future are key leadership qualities for respondents according to the FG results, neither Serzh Sargsyan, nor Raffi Hovhanissian have all these valuable traits. Serzh Sargsyan focused on his experience as a political leader and on his educational background, while Raffi Hovhanissian presented himself as a very communicable and honest person. Consequently, both of them included traits of ideal leaders in their projected images, but still their projected images are not the same with the ideal ones.

According to the focus groups results, the ideal political leader is a 45 (or older) old man, with wealthy life experience, who has a vision of Armenia's future and has a clear plan how it can be achieved. The general conclusion from the research results is that people put more emphasis on charisma, for electoral group it is preferred to follow a charismatic leader. At the same time, political leaders put emphasis on their education and experience in politics. Here the main contradiction between ideal and projected images of leaders can be observed, because political leaders present themselves as educated and experienced persons, while people want to



have a charismatic leader. A recommendation for future Armenian political leaders is to create an image of a charismatic person, with a clear vision for future of Armenia.



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## ***Appendix 1***

### *Focus group guide*

1. Please, introduce yourself.
2. What are characteristics that any successful person should have in your opinion? Why?
3. What are characteristics that any political leader should have in your opinion? Why?
4. Please, present a political leader whom you will support. What are his/her main characteristics (age, gender, education, background)?
5. As there is any political leader (international or domestic) who is close to your understanding of ideal political leader? Why s/he?
6. Is there any person in Armenia, who can be a good political leader/president for this country? Why?
7. Whom do you dislike (speaking about political leaders)?

Thank You :)



## *Appendix 2: Content Analysis Categories*

### *Stereotypes*

Stereotypes	Frequency	Block	Context
Good father			
Hero			
Patriot			
Popular			
Educated			



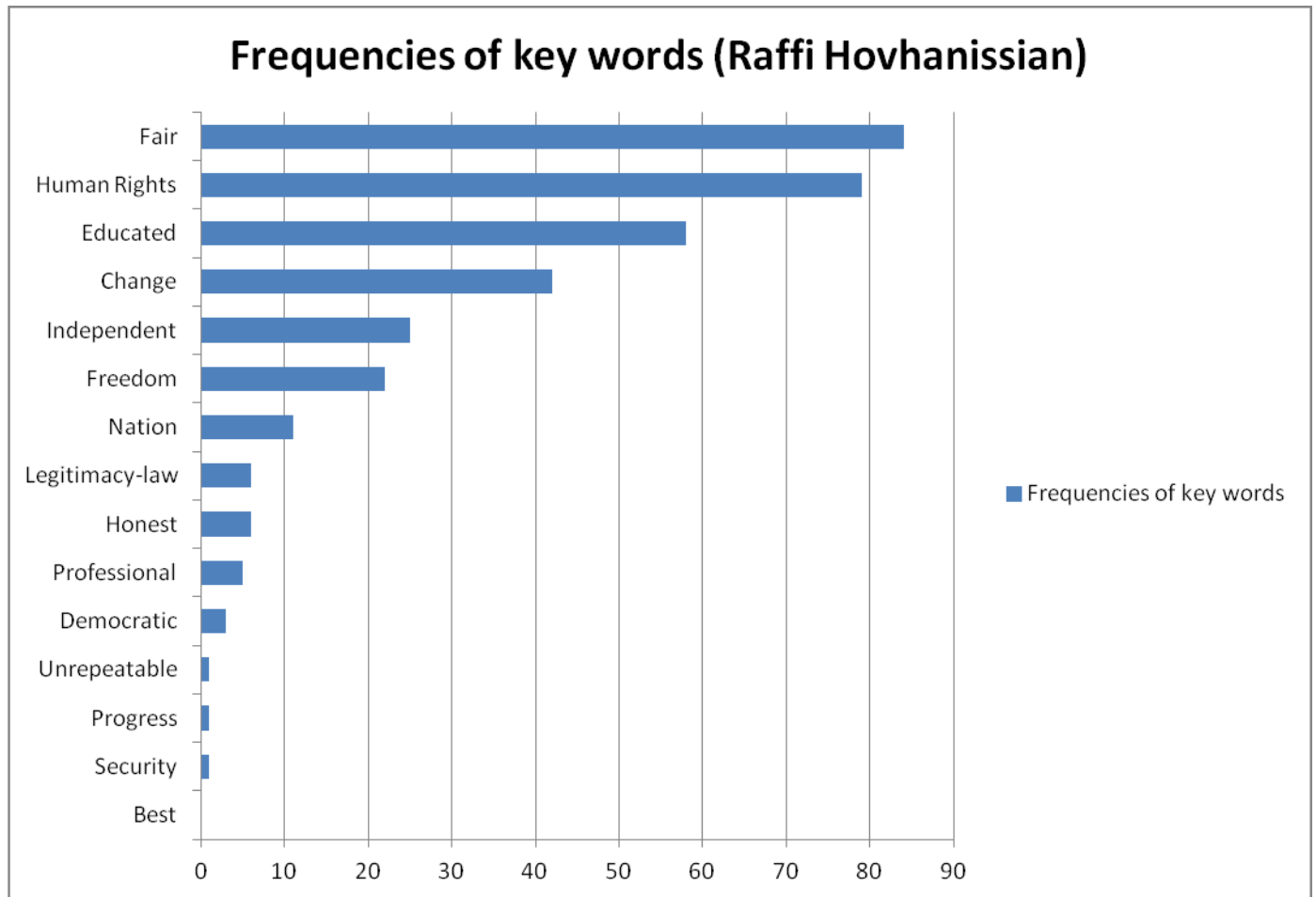
### *Appendix 3: Content Analysis Categories*

#### *Words*

Words	Frequency	Block	Context
Best			
Change			
Unrepeatable			
Independent			
Democratic			
Fair			
Honest			
Freedom			
Legitimacy -law			
Security			
Nation			
Progress			
(Human) Rights			



*Appendix 4. Key words with frequencies from content analysis (Raffi Hovhanissian)*





*Appendix 5. Key words with frequencies from content analysis (Serzh Sargsyan)*

