

Summary

The Relationship Between Ethnic Identity, European Identity and Attitudes Towards EU

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The ongoing discussion on accession of Turkey to the European Union (EU) on media or among academics has been widely built on a view of Turkey as a uniformed society. However, the literature on EU integration (Arends-Toth, 2003; Chrysochoou, 2000ab; Cinnirella, 1996, 1997, 1998, 2001; Cinnirella and Hamilton, 2007; Duchesne, 2008; Licata, 2003; Nagayoshi, 2011; Ruthland and Cinnirella, 2000; Wienrich, 1998) has indicated that the opinions related to EU membership are influenced by identification with multiple social identities. The previous research related to Turkey's entry to the EU (Göregenli and Teközel, 2006; Göregenli et al., 2008; Hortaçsu and Cem-Ersoy, 2005; Sandal-Önal, 2007) demonstrated that there is strong in-group belonging on the base of national identity in Turkey. Moreover this research showed that ethnic identity has a significant effect on attitudes towards the EU.

Social Identity Theory and Strategies to Cope With Negative Social Identity

Social identity theory suggests that the social identity is formed in relation to individual's group memberships (Tajfel, 1982; Turner, 1978). The individuals form negative or positive perceptions towards their group memberships on the basis of social characteristics of the group and perceived group status differences (Tajfel, 1982; Turner, 1999). Individuals are motivated to achieve or maintain positive distinctiveness of their social identities. When the individuals perceive a negative social identity, they engage in several strategies to cope with an unfavorable in-group position or a negative social identity (Brown and Abrams, 1985; Doosje, Spears and Ellemers, 2002; Tajfel and Turner, 1986; Van Knippenberg and Ellemers, 1990). These strategies may occur in three ways: individual mobility, social creativity and social competition (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). In individual mobility, the members of the groups may identify with the group at a low level of attachment or they may search for ways to be a member of another high-status

group in order to escape negative group membership. The strategy of social creativity means that the members of the group may create new strategies for comparing the in-group with out-groups. Social competition is based on the idea that competition with an out-group is possible (Blanz, Mummendey, Mielke and Klink, 1998; Tajfel, 1978).

Multiple Social Identities

It was previously argued that people's willingness to perceive themselves as members of a category has impact on how this category is constructed and how it acquires its meaning. Within the context of intergroup relations, a religious identification might become central to a person's sense of who they are because of its association with specific ethnic identification (Chrysochoou, 2000ab). Thus, it is important to understand how these different social identifications become central to the self-concept. In particular, "European identity" may also become a central or distant social category depending on its association with specific types of social identifications, such as ethnic identity. Moreover, identification with European identity may also relate to attitudes towards EU. Previous research showed that Turkish participants rated their in-group highly negatively while comparing to an out-group such as "Europeans," although they had a high level of in-group belonging (Göregenli et al., 2008; Göregenli and Teközel, 2006).

With regard to viewing integration to the EU as a dynamic and changing process, there is no effort to understand how identification with multiple social identities relates to the attitudes towards accession of Turkey to the EU. In this sense, the present study aims to examine the relationship between identification with multiple social identities and attitudes towards the EU on the basis of an understanding of society as multicultural rather homogenous.

Method

Participants

The sample consists of 250 participants (115 male and 135 female). The participants were drawn from the city of Izmir in Turkey ($M=32.88$, $SD=11.05$); 41.1% of participants were university graduates. 50.8% of the participants identified as Turkish, 29.2% of the participants identified as Kurdish, and the rest of the participants (20%) were from other ethnic groups.

Materials

In this study a questionnaire including socio-demographic variables and attitude scales was used (Cinnirella, 1997; Cinnirella and Hamilton, 2007; Göregenli, 2010; Göregenli and Teközel, 2006). The subsections of the questionnaire are described below.

Socio-demographic variables. Questions about gender, age, education level, monthly income level and place of birth were included.

Attitudes towards Turkey's EU membership: All participants were asked to rate their support for Turkey's EU membership on a single item, where the responses ranges from "Strongly disagree" (1) to "Strongly agree" (7).

Attitudes toward Europe and strategies: This scale consists of 11 items related to perceived importance of Europe and the possible advantages of European membership (Blanz et al., 1998; Cinnirella and Hamilton, 2007). Participants indicated their agreement with each statement on a 5-point scale, 1=strongly disagree, and 5=strongly agree. The higher points indicate a more positive view of Europe. The internal reliability alpha score in this study was .88. A principal component analysis yielded three factors that explained 74.5% of the total variance. The first factor included five items and accounted for 33.9% of the variance and represented "realistic competition". The second factor consisted of four items and accounted for 23.9% of the variance and represented "assimilation strategy". The third factor included two items and accounted for 16.6% for the variance and named as "social competition".

Social identifications: This scale was used in order to measure the identification level of five different social identity categories: European identity, Ethnic identity, Urban identity, Religious identity and Gender identity. The items adopted from Cinnirella's (1997) work on European identity. Sample questions include "to what extent do you feel European?"; "how important to you is being European?". For the purposes of measuring other social identities, the word "European" was substituted by the other four social categories. Participants indicated their response with each statement on a 7-point scale, 1=not at all, and 7=extremely important. The higher

points indicate higher level of social identification. The internal reliability alpha score for all five types of social identity were higher than .80.

Visual representation of identities task: This chart was developed by Cinnirella and Hamilton (2007) in order to measure the centrality of an identity, by which is meant the degree to which it is the very core of the person's self-concept. For the present study, this chart was adopted in order to measure the centrality of five social identity categories in relation to self. The participants were asked to place the symbols of five social identities on the chart in relation to self which was shown at the centre of the chart (See Figure 1). Each circle on the chart was representing the score of centrality ranging from "1 – Most central" to 6 "Least central" to self-concept. The internal reliability alpha score was 0.62.

Results and Discussion

The method of visual representation of identities was found to be useful in order to examine the centrality of multiple social identities in relation to self-concept. By virtue of this research, this method was adopted to Turkish culture with a sufficient reliability and good validity. The main effects of the placement of the ethnic identity symbol on the chart were significant on ethnic identification, social competition and European identification. As the symbol of ethnic identity places more central to the self the mean scores of ethnic identification and social competition increase. Furthermore while the symbol of ethnic identity places more central to the self, the mean score of European identification decreases.

Concerning the placement of European identity symbol on the chart, the participants who placed this symbol as central to their self-concept had higher mean scores of European identification and assimilation strategy than the participants who placed the symbol less central. Moreover, the participants who perceives the European identity as a central part of their self supported accession of Turkey to the EU than the other participants. Finally, these participants had lower score of realistic competition than the participants who placed this symbol further.

There were significant differences on placement of identity symbols on the chart in terms of ethnic identity of the participants. Thus, Kurds placed the symbol of ethnic identity more central to their self-concept than Turks and other ethnic groups did, whereas Turks placed the symbol of European identity more central to their self than Kurds did. Moreover, Kurds had higher mean scores of ethnic identification than the other ethnic groups had. For European identification, Kurds were found to have lower mean scores than Turks and other groups. These findings were in line with other evidence

from Turkey and other cultural contexts (Cinnirella and Hamilton, 2007; Göregenli et al., 2008; Göregenli and Teközel, 2006; Hortaçsu and Cem-Ersoy, 2005; Sandal-Önal, 2007).

The findings of multiple regression analysis showed that realistic competition, the placement of ethnic identity symbol and the placement of European identity on the chart are the significant predictors of being in favor of accession of Turkey to the EU. In addition, the findings of multiple regression analysis showed that the placement of urban identity on the chart, European identification and assimilation were the significant predictors of the placement of European identity symbol on the chart.

In conclusion, results supported that the attitudes towards Europe and the EU are closely related to the identification levels of different social identities especially ethnic identity, European identity and urban identity. The present study showed the dynamic and interactive nature of multiple social identities which changes according to the different social contexts.