Chapter 11
Falling Outside Identity: The Creation and Boundaries of Turkish National Identity and Its Consequences for Minorities

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Introduction

National identity and its consequences have been a major element of ongoing conflict and strife in Turkey for years. Its definition and boundaries have been a source of contention, often referenced as a culprit in ongoing struggles for rights and freedoms, since the inception of modern Turkey. The country has done its best to create a homogeneous citizenry, with only Armenians, Greeks, and Jews as recognized minorities in a country where some estimates say there are hundreds of ethnic groups (Yeğen, 2004), although no official numbers exist. In such a complex environment, understandings of self and social identity become increasingly difficult.

Through this chapter, we will address the historical and sociological background of Turkish identity. We will use relevant constructs within social psychology, such as the recognition and nonrecognition of identity (e.g., Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011) as they relate to boundaries of identity and the common ingroup identity model (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000) as it relates to attempts in Turkey's history to create a common ingroup. We will then explore examples from contemporary social psychological research on Kurdish and Alevi identities, being of groups who are not officially recognized as minorities but who make up the largest minority populations in the country. This chapter will, therefore, discuss particular contextual factors of identification, the important antecedents and consequences of that identification, and important points for the study of identity in Turkey.

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Complexities of Turkish National Identity

Turkish national identity is firmly rooted in the last years of the Ottoman Empire and the beginning of the Turkish Republic, when the rise of the concept of nation-states in Western Europe and the ongoing and continual loss of land in the empire led to existential questions about what it means to belong. With the start of the new Turkish Republic, Turkish national identity was formed on the basis of a specific ethnic and religious background—ethnically Turkish and religiously Sunni Muslim—where those who did not fit were either assimilated through internal population exchanges and national education practices or excluded through forced migration. In contemporary Turkey, with increased revivals of minority identification ongoing since the 1980s and 1990s, understanding the origins of latent ethnoreligious construals of citizenship can help to explain the way minorities understand their own minority identities, as well as how they relate to the larger national identity of Turkey.

National identities can be understood as containers of other identities (Bhabha, 1990) within the boundaries of the nation-state; relatedly, Turkish national identity was constructed on the foundations of homogeneity, integrity, and unity (Ünlü, 2014) at the expense of disregarding or indeed denying the distinctiveness of different ethnic or religious groups (Aslan, 2007; Bilali, 2013, 2014; Göl, 2005; Saracoglu, 2009; Yeğen, 2006). The attempts of nation-states to create a sense of unity and homogeneity out of diverse communities have long been a crucial topic in the debates of politics of diversity within the theoretical frameworks of citizenship (Isin, 2002; Yuval-Davis, 2007), multiculturalism–interculturalism (Guilherme & Dietz, 2015; Vertovec, 2010), migration, inclusion–exclusion, and national identities (Howarth, 2016; Verkuyten, 2014). A critical point here to be considered is that minority groups that constitute diversity are not monotypic, and hence, their claims for certain rights such as recognition might also be diverse (Modood, 2016). In a world order based on nations and nation-states, immigrants who cross borders and become the "others of the community" might be considered as symbolic threats to the homogeneity of the nation, but this can also be evident for the historical minorities who, despite not crossing borders, are considered to be "others" (Triandafyllidou, 2014).

This difference between immigrants and historical minorities is especially relevant in the case of Turkish national identity. It requires not only a context-dependent outlook on recognition but also the identity claims of the minorities. The process in which those who are not ethnically Turkish and not religiously Sunni were exposed to "othering" is historical, and the roots of this exclusion might lie in the past conflicts of these groups, as well as in how these conflicts are remembered or represented (Winiewski & Bulska, 2019). Therefore, it is important to elaborate on the content of Turkish national identity to reveal how othering of minorities stems from the historical and current narratives that construct the national identity itself.

Identity Recognition and Common Ingroups

Relying on social identity and self-categorization theory (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1985, 1991; Turner et al., 1987; see also Abrams & Hogg, 2010; Hogg, 2006; Hogg & Abrams, 1988), we know that the self is hierarchically organized, context specific, and variable. People categorize themselves in different social situations based on representations of the self as personal or social, but social representation changes its level based on whether it is as part of a superordinate or subcategory of an identity. Therefore, in different situations, a person can be seen as ingroup or outgroup based on the salience of a particular identity (Subašić et al., 2008). It may be the case, for example, that an individual sees themselves as part of a larger category, such as European, or a subcategory of that larger group, such as German. In some cases, non-German Europeans may be considered members of the ingroup and, in others, members of the outgroup.

A particular social identity is understood and defined in terms of its differences from other social identities. Understanding differences occurs through a process of social comparison, where group members contrast their category with others in order to determine who they are and who they are not. National identity, then, is about the common traits or cultural markers held by that people living in the same territory, as well as markers that differ from those of people in other territories. However, the boundaries and definitions of the category are not objective. Reicher and Hopkins (2001) note that categorical understandings of the world are created and maintained by human agents. In many cases, those human agents have acted at previous points in history, and their particular way of organizing the categories has become institutionalized in our systems. As they state, "if it appears to us as external and objective that is because it is not a product of *our* subjectivity and not because it is independent of any human subjectivity" (p. 48). In the case of Turkey, the national category was constructed in a time of change and upheaval and has for many contemporary Turks become concrete and untouchable due to the nature of its formation (see İnce, 2012).

Once an identity has been constructed, it has to be recognized by others. Recognition of group identity is another central factor in terms of who is considered a member of the ingroup or outgroup. Recognition, broadly understood as people feeling that their own sense of identity is affirmed (Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011), and nonrecognition has an important influence on intra- and intergroup relations. Nonrecognition of identity can influence how people feel and behave in their everyday interactions in the public sphere: if people feel their identity is not affirmed, they may avoid or feel constrained by interaction and could even be the subject of threat or harm (Hogg et al., 2005; Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011). Some forms of identity threat may come about when a person is miscategorized, either as belonging to a social category into which they prefer not to be categorized, or when attention is given to their superordinate identity rather than a subgroup identity they feel is more important (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000). Nonrecognition or misrecognition can also be taken as a form of oppression. As expressed by Franz Fanon, "the major

weapon of the colonizers was the imposition of their image of the colonized on the subjected people" (Taylor, 1994, p. 65). Compelling people to live their lives through an identity that has been formed or chosen for them, rather than the one they would choose to categorize themselves, could certainly fall in this category.

Often used as a means to bring people together in a single category, the common ingroup identity model (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000) utilizes multiple categorizations as a strategy to improve intergroup relations. The model suggests that by recategorizing individuals in a superordinate category, they can create a common group identity, resulting in positive outcomes including lower levels of threat, forgiveness, and improved attitudes toward individuals who were previously considered outgroup members (Abrams & Hogg, 1988; Riek et al., 2010; Wohl & Branscombe, 2005). As mentioned above, though, utilizing superordinate categorizations can be tricky, especially when individuals feel less attached to the common ingroup than they do to a subordinate group or other categorization. As we continue this chapter, we will refer back to the concepts of social identity, identity recognition, and common ingroup in order to frame the way Turkish identity was created and utilized and how minorities in Turkey view their own and others' identifications.

The Formation of Turkish National Identity

In order to provide an in-depth look into the origins of Turkish national identity, it is helpful to provide some context to the era in which it was formed. The Ottoman Empire was based on a multicultural structure, and through the implementation of the *millet system*, different communities in society were able to practice their own laws without the intervention of the state (Dönmez, 2011), meaning that an autonomous process was in practice for the diverse groups that comprised the empire. The communities were mainly defined through different religious and ethnic identities and were only really responsible to the state for paying taxes and providing military contributions. The millet system was initiated with the reforms implemented by the Edict of Gülhane (*Tanzimat Fermanı*) of 1839 to provide for the integration of different ethnic and religious groups into the empire (Akman, 2004) under the common identity of Ottoman. However, attempts at providing equity in terms of security, taxation, and justice led to conflicts between the majority Sunni Muslim group and minority Christians and Jews.

The ongoing wars at the time led to territorial losses in the 1910s and resulted in the emergence of Islamism as another common identity, given that the majority of the population in the remaining lands was of Sunni Muslim origin. Yet after the Committee of Union and Progress (*İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*) came into power, they put forward an ethnocentric ideology of Turkishness as a means of bringing cohesion to the state. Turkishness here refers to making the Turkish ethnic category the main pillar of Turkish national identity (Ersanlı, 2008). Ethnic Turkishness was based on a well-known article by Akçura (1904/1998), "Three Types of Policy," in which he compared three bases for a common identity that could unite people living

under Ottoman rule: Turkism, Islamism, and Ottomanism. Turkishness, as a basis for a common identity, was characterized by ethnic origin, common language, and a common cultural inheritance. Throughout the construction of Turkish national identity, this ethnically formulated Turkishness was concurrently used as a superordinate category under which ethnically and religiously diverse communities in society would be integrated.

However, the narratives of Turkishness included possessing the attributes of civilization, development, heroism, and so forth (Üstel, 2004; Yıldız, 2001), which easily allowed for the othering of minorities who are not included in the boundaries of Turkishness. Accordingly, Turkishness led to the emergence of a privileged category for the ethnic Turks who—consciously or unconsciously—perceived and gave meaning to the world through the lens of their ethnicity, compared with others who did not have this privilege (Ünlü, 2014). Prioritizing ethnic Turkishness resulted in the exclusion of not only the religious minorities of Armenians, Jews, and Greeks but also those Sunni Muslims with other ethnic identities (e.g., Kurds). The populations of non-Muslims remaining at the birth of the Turkish Republic were officially defined as minorities with the Lausanne Treaty in 1923, while other minorities such as Kurds or Alevis were either not recognized or misrecognized, and the aspects of their identities that enable them to be recognized distinctively were used to denigrate them (Saracoglu, 2009).

Contents of National Identity: Any Space for Citizenship?

Citizenship and national identity are closely related and are oftentimes viewed as interdependent and interchangeable group memberships related to a sense of belonging to a nation (Aktoprak, 2011). Utilizing national boundaries as the legitimate limits of citizenship, as opposed to defining the latter more universally, inevitably puts the historical, political, and social burdens of the nation's narrative onto the scope of citizenship. This seems to be the case in Turkey, as the content of the term "Turk" is filled with national, civic, and ethnic discourses (Aslan, 2007; Cingöz-Ulu, 2008; Özkırımlı, 2008). Both nationality and citizenship, in their interchangeable usages, refer to common ingroup categories (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000), so it is important to understand the content and the limits of these categories to see their influences on including or excluding certain populations in society. As such, this section of the chapter will examine the boundaries of national identity and provide a basic overview of its content in relation to Turkish citizenship, as well as discuss which categories are included and excluded from it.

The Turkish national narrative that contributes to the construction of national identity has its roots in the early twentieth century, when, starting in Western Europe, the rise of nation-states was already well under way. Saatçi (2002) stated that the emergence of Turkish national identity was a delayed phenomenon due to its geographic position on Europe's periphery, leading to a rush to catch up with the *zeitgeist* prevailing at the time. The result of this rush was the dominance of an enmity-based identity content against others, which was also enhanced by the

political context that, at the time, favored the rise of threat and security narratives (Altınay & Bora, 2008).

Independence movements in the Balkans starting in the 1850s characterized the final years of the Ottoman Empire, which problematized the matter of nationalism for the cohesion of the empire and resulted in the rise of a securitization discourse[1] against minorities who made national claims (İçduygu & Kaygusuz, 2004; Karaosmanoğlu, 2000; Keyman, 2001). Meanwhile, the *zeitgeist* favoring the rise of nationalism made it more difficult to hold the culturally diverse empire together, and authorities utilized different common ingroup identities to provide cohesion based on Ottoman identity, religion, or ethnicity (i.e., Turkishness).

These attempts at creating common ingroups still have an effect on the culture and categorizations taking place in Turkey today and remain relevant as we attempt to fully grasp the current conditions of religious and ethnic minorities in Turkey. According to Akçam (2008), Islam and Turkishness in the Ottoman Empire developed independently from one another, where the former progressed as a result of forgetting the latter, while the developments during the reform process of the Empire led to the rise of an ethnic Turkish discourse, which "glorified" the Ottoman Turks as the only group that could lead the government. Göçek (2008) states that this idea politicized an understanding of nationalism based on ethnicity over the previous common categories that stood on cultural characteristics.[2] The constructed national identity, therefore, was more likely to be inspired by an ethnocentric discourse, which carries an essentialist core (Özkırımlı, 2008; see also Grigoriadis, 2009), and minorities can only be included in the national identity by transforming their own identities through "Turkification" (Uğur-Çınar, 2015).

Although the emergence of the Turkish Republic after the Ottoman Empire stands as a rupture in terms of the political regime, the construction of national identity is not peculiar to the Turkish Republic, as the roots of the national narrative lie in the rising political ideology of the Committee of Union and Progress, corresponding to the last periods of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. The Committee was initiated by the Young Turks movement, and its ideology refers to the primacy of modernization, Westernization, and centralization of the state in its late period. The main tendency of the movement was to provide cohesion based on a homogenized nation, inspired by French nationalism, by imposing a common ingroup identity to the peoples of the state who have different ethnic and/or religious identities. Although the common identity emerged under the name "Turk,"[3] different groups of people (including Kurds, Arabs, and Alevis, among others) were considered as members of this category based on a

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[1] Securitization discourse here refers to an emphasis on overprotection of societies from 'outsiders' through the social construction of security issues (Kaya, 2012).

[2] Though the boundaries between what is cultural and what is ethnic are ambiguous; this statement emphasizes the former category as more inclusive and the latter as more exclusionary.

[3] Favoring the identity of Turk rather than other commonalities such as Islam or Ottoman identity required a construction of an ethnic narrative, because this term also refers to an ethnic category in the society.

compact of citizenship. The creation of the common identity in the Turkish Republic relied heavily on the standardization of language and historical narratives transmitted through education, with the adoption of a language policy considered to be one of the most important strategies used to solidify the burgeoning Turkish identity during the transition from empire to nation-state (Aydıngün & Aydıngün, 2004).

Denial and Exclusion of Differences in Turkish National Identity

Historical representations are critical in terms of determining the criteria for the construction of "us" (Dresler-Hawke, 2005). Representations are also important in that they can be used to define "others," that is, those who will be excluded from the national category. The myths, stories, or official historical narratives of nations mostly involve the rhetoric of "us/them" in defining the friends or foes of their groups; these narratives are collectively shared by the members of the nation through the political socialization process (Uyan-Semerci et al., 2017).

Master narratives, as the "cultural scripts about the meaning of social categories that exist in cultural artifacts and mass texts" (Hammack & Pilecki, 2012, p. 17), are among the most convenient means to transmit historical representations about the nation (Hammack, 2011). These are not only critical in terms of understanding how political content is processed by a group of individuals but are also important in terms of the subjective constructions of the ingroup during the course of political socialization. Here, in order to investigate how the history of Turkey is represented and shared collectively in terms of its influences on national identity, master narratives can provide important clues about the boundaries drawn for the national identity.

The definition of Turkish national identity utilizes a master narrative that reflects the superiority of Turks while also encapsulating a justification mechanism for the exclusion of certain minority groups. Barış Ünlü (2014) describes Turkish identity as a status of Whiteness, and in order to clarify this, he suggests a (hidden) "Turkishness Contract" among the citizens of Turkey, which results in discrimination against citizens of non-Turkish origin by those who fit the definition of Turk, although the actors are mostly unaware of their advantaged and dominant position. Ünlü (2014) suggests that the initial attempts of constructing Turkishness date back to the 1910s and 1920s, in which non-Muslims and non-Turks were excluded from the Turkish nation-state. So, the Turkishness Contract encompassed different Muslim groups who were accepted as Turks and were, in return, provided a secure and advantaged life in the country. Those who were not Turks, especially Kurds and Armenians, were systematically denied or punished, and related historical narratives were suppressed (Kurtiş et al., 2018).

The critical point here concerns those who are considered to be unacceptable for Turkish national identity. Regarding the dynamic nature of identities (Hall, 1996),

including national or citizenship identities, it is clear that those who are excluded from the boundaries of identity would change based on context (Çelik et al., 2017). However, the consolidation of Turkish national identity is provided on recognition or nonrecognition of certain groups as acceptable categories for inclusion in the category of Turkishness—not only the non-Muslim minorities specified by the Lausanne Treaty in 1923 but also those who belong to Muslim groups but who do not fit the ethnoreligious criteria of Sunni Muslim and Turk (Çelik et al., 2017; Çoban-Keneş, 2015; Parlak, 2015).

Turkishness and Minority Identities in Contemporary Research

As thus far described, Turkish national identity is normatively considered to be ethnically and linguistically Turkish and religiously Sunni Muslim. Those who fall outside of these categorizations, that is, those who are ethnically non-Turkish (Kurds, Armenians, Greeks, etc.) or religiously not Muslim (Armenians, Greeks, Jews) or not Sunni (Alevis), are marginalized or "otherized" in Turkish discourse. When considering the majority of the Turkish population as falling into these three categories, those that fall outside are one of two categories: recognized and unrecognized minorities. As mentioned above, the recognized minorities are Armenians, Greeks, and Jews. Anyone else who falls into a minority category is not officially recognized as such and is therefore expected to fall into the traditional narrative of civic Turkish citizenship (unlike recognized minorities, who do not face the same expectation). In this section, we discuss research on social identity conducted with two widely discussed—albeit not officially recognized—minorities: Kurds and Alevis.

Kurds are an ethnic and linguistic minority in Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. In Turkey, they number approximately 10–15 million people, making them the largest ethnic minority in the country. Alevis can broadly be defined as a religious minority whose heterodox faith includes elements of Shiism, Sunnism, and Sufism (Göner, 2005). There is no reliable data to reflect the actual population of Alevis; however, estimates range between 10 and 20 million, making Alevis one of the largest religious groups in Turkey (Gezik & Gültekin, 2019). We note, though, that being Kurdish and being Alevi are not mutually exclusive; just as one can be Turkish and Alevi or Kurdish and Sunni, one can also be Kurdish and Alevi (Acar, 2020).

We focus on these two groups for two reasons: First, they are widely known; Kurds are the largest ethnic minority in Turkey, and Alevis the largest religious/sectarian minority. Second, as described above, Turkish national identity has been created on the basis of inclusion ethnically as Turkish and religiously as Sunni. Despite not being officially recognized as minorities, Kurdishness falls on the ethnic and linguistic outgroup aspect of Turkishness, while Aleviness falls on the religious outgroup aspect of Turkishness. We will detail research that describes

understandings of identity based on these two identifications as they relate to Turkish identity.

Naming Turkish Identity

Much previous social psychological research on Kurds and Alevis as they relate to Turkish citizenship have focused on ways to bring these identities into the fold, that is, to bring them under a common ingroup identity. As described above, this has been attempted numerous times throughout the history of Turkey and continues to be attempted today through the national narratives and rhetoric that are often passed on to children through the education system. This approach is oftentimes considered assimilationist, as it requires the erasure of an important identity (e.g., Kurdish ethnic identity) in order to give space to the more common identity (e.g., Turkish national identity).

Contemporary social psychology has attempted to approach the issue through the common ingroup identity model, previously applied in a number of different conflict contexts as a means of bringing together two groups who have previously been in violent conflict with one another to create a new, common group (see, e.g., Andrighetto et al., 2012; Noor et al., 2008). Attempting to replicate this work in Turkey means accurately labeling Turkey a context rife with conflict, the difference being that previous work has approached a wider identity with both groups in conflict as subgroups, whereas in Turkey, the overarching common ingroup (i.e., Turkish) is still considered to be representative of the majority, more so than both groups equally.

One major issue in approaching this research has been that different ways of "naming" Turkish citizenship have been utilized to find the most appropriate way to describe the common group. When translated into Turkish, asking about identification as a citizen becomes a complicated problem that requires a rather nuanced approach. One could, when referring to identity as a citizen of Turkey, ask participants how much they identify as a Turk (*Türk olmak*), as a person from Turkey (*Türkiyeli olmak*), how much they identify as a Turkish citizen (*Türk vatandaşı olmak*), or how much they identify as a citizen of Turkey (*Türkiye vatandaşı olmak*). Each is essentially a political choice on the part of the researcher and on the part of the participant. For example, many Turks are more likely to identify with the category of "Turk" than the category "citizen of Turkey" (Çelebi et al., 2014). This may be because minority identities are perceived as threatening to majority group Turks (Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2006). While "citizen of Turkey" is more inclusive, it also inherently creates distance from the national rhetoric surrounding Turkishness. The converse is true for Kurds. At the same time, ethnic identification is also similarly politically nuanced—one may ask if someone is of Turkish or Kurdish origin (*Türk veya Kürt kökenli olmak*) or directly ask if someone is Kurdish (*Kürt olmak*). Asking about origin indicates a distancing from importance of ethnic identification and falls

into more traditional national rhetoric—citizens of Turkey can be of any origin but are all inherently "Turkish" (Yeğen, 2004).

Previous research has also indicated that Turks tend to have higher national identification than ethnic identification, while the opposite holds true for Kurds (Bağcı & Çelebi, 2017; Çelebi et al., 2014; Çelebi et al., 2016). That is, while Turks do not place much importance on ethnicity (i.e., being ethnically Turkish), they give great importance to national identity (though, of course, these two are construed similarly). On the other hand, Kurdishness is more important to Kurds than is identification as a Turkish citizen. As described above, however, different researchers have named Turkish identity differently, so when Kurds are asked about their common ingroup in regard to citizenship, responses have different degrees of identification based on the different ways it has been described.

In addition to addressing Turkishness, another approach has been to utilize Islam as a common ingroup to unify Turks and Kurds, as opposed to Turkish citizenship. This research tends to focus on the strength of identification at different levels of nationality, religion, and ethnicity. The research tends to find that while a common religious identity is a useful construct for religious Turks, it does not necessarily have the effect of curbing Kurdish ethnonationalist sentiment (Baysu et al., 2018; Sarigil & Karakoc, 2017), as the approach of using religion to bridge groups is also considered assimilationist (see also Sarıgil & Fazlıoğlu, 2013). Utilizing religion as a unifier has been used historically since the final days of the Ottoman Empire, as well as contemporarily by the current Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* [AKP]) government. Especially during the Peace Process in 2013–2015, the AKP attempted to use religion as a tool to bring Kurds in line with a common ingroup based on Sunni Islam (Merdjanova, 2017; Türkmen, 2018). However, this distanced Kurdish Alevis, who felt that using religion in this way both left them out of negotiations and failed to address their concerns regarding a potential peace (Acar, 2020; Yaman et al., 2014).

Alevism is inherently disassociated from conversations of Islam as a common ingroup. As discussed above, the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic focused on the creation of a Turkish Sunni nation-state. Sunni–Alevi divisions became increasingly apparent over time, with a number of incidents of violence against Alevis, such as the massacres in the cities of Maraş and Çorum, initiated by extreme Turkish nationalists in 1978 and 1980; the Sivas massacre by religious Sunnis in 1993; and more recently the Gezi Park protests in 2013, in which the protesters who died were all young Alevi men (Çelik et al., 2017).

Some research conducted with Alevis indicates they tend to have lower religious identification than Sunnis (Martinovic & Verkuyten, 2016), but this is possibly due to the multifaceted way that Alevism is understood (PODEM, 2016). With the revival of Alevi identity in both Turkey and the diaspora communities (Göner, 2005), Alevism has started to be understood as a political and a cultural identity, in addition to a religious one (van Bruinessen, 1996). These multifaceted understandings of identity have emerged more since Alevis have migrated from rural areas to cosmopolitan cities, where they have increased contact with other groups. Some recent and ongoing work has attempted to pull apart the nuances between these

religious, political, and cultural identities (e.g., Tekdemir, 2017), though with the many schisms in identity related to Alevism (ethnic, urban vs. rural, etc.), this will likely be a line of research that will be subject to further attention in the future.

Future Directions for Research on Minority Identities

Despite the work that has been described above, there is still a great deal related to identity in Turkey that has yet to be explored. First and foremost, we see a lack of work on the dimensions of Turkish identity. Although through this chapter we have created a historical narrative to help describe how Turkish identity came to be, we believe the way that Turkish identity is described both by majority and minority citizens of Turkey ought to be better explored. How do minorities view the boundaries of the identity, for example, and how do they feel their own behavior is expected to change to match the expectations of the "acceptable" citizen? We also note here that while we have touched on how national identity in Turkey has changed over time, we have neither the space nor the capacity to accurately describe the major changes that have taken place both through the multiple military coups that have affected the country and through ongoing global changes that have impacted Turkey's perception of identity itself (Ahmad, 1993, 2014; Ergil, 2000; Keyman, 1995). We recommend, therefore, that future research addresses how the master narratives of identity have changed through the years and how this now influences the way identity has been constructed and reconstructed over time.

In a recent article, Bayad et al. (2020) conducted a meta-analysis of psychology theses written in Turkey between 2000 and 2019. Of the 3895 theses, only 33 are directly or indirectly related to Kurds. Of those 33, only 10 actually use the word "Kurd," and only half of the 33 refer in any way to the Kurdish issue. The authors of this chapter emphasize through this research that most of the work related to Kurdish identity or the Kurdish issue is conducted outside of Turkey and that without the perspective of researchers in Turkey, what little knowledge we have of identity strategies among Kurds is limited, at best. While it is clear that more research needs to be conducted by Turkish-based researchers, the lack of a clear sense of Turkish identity, as has been described in this chapter, combined with the (self) censorship that comes with studying sensitive issues in Turkey, likely prevents this.

It is also important to remember that Turkey is a context in conflict. Ongoing and historical conflicts with Armenians, Kurds, Alevis, and others are all extremely relevant in the way identity is structured. As mentioned above, threat and security narratives have been very strongly utilized in the creation of Turkish national identity (Altınay & Bora, 2008). As such, the histories and perspectives of the other are rarely given credence. Recent work has tried to shed a more nuanced light on both majority and minority identities through perspectives on political events, such as the Gezi Park protests, which showcased solidarity between groups that had not previously worked together in order to achieve a common goal (see, e.g., Acar & Uluğ, 2016; Uluğ & Cohrs, 2019). Another approach to nuance has been through better

understanding of different narratives with regard to the Turkish–Kurdish conflict (see, e.g., Uluğ & Cohrs, 2017) or understanding the conflict from the perspective of actors whose voices are rarely heard (see, e.g., Acar, 2019). Alevi identity, which has experienced a wave of politicization since the 1980s, has been the least explored in the context of Turkey, though research related to this particular identity will have important contextual impact, as well as provide one more perspective on different religious groups in conflict.

Conclusion

Through this chapter, we have tried to provide a historical, sociological, and psychological framework to explain how Turkish identity was formed, how it has changed, and the impact of that identity on minorities living in Turkey. We have also explored the aspects of the social psychological literature that have been studied in this context, as well as the particular subjects we believe require further study in the future. Populist discourses based on us–them distinctions still prevail, in addition to the intractable conflicts that have their roots in the aforementioned historical context. It seems, too, that without constitutional assurances of minority rights, identity-related conflicts are not likely to be resolved. We believe knowing the unique cultural and political context of Turkey, and the way identity has been (and continues to be) shaped by this context, will inform the way identity can be studied in the context of Turkey in the future, especially as it relates to minority perspectives.

One of the points highlighted in this chapter is that the content and subjective understandings of national identity by different ethnic and religious groups living in nation-states are of utmost importance, especially in contexts where historical asymmetrical intergroup conflicts prevail. Research in social and political psychology that focuses on the potential for national identity to constitute an umbrella category for managing diversity in these societies should reconsider this approach and take a critical stance with regard to the subjective meanings of national identity through the images and representations that are communicated and circulated within different groups (Ardağ et al., 2017), as well as their connotations for ethnicity, descent, history, and all relevant content that has the potential to exclude certain minorities.

For Turkey, as a context where the concepts of citizenship and an exclusionary national identity are intertwined, it is important for policymakers, social scientists, and all parts of civil society to reconsider the ways in which national identity is defined and consider either a redefinition with a civic content, as suggested by Jones and Smith (2001), or to work on another common civic category that could embrace all ethnic and religious groups living in the country. It is expected that this chapter will contribute to the further studies of Turkish national identity content, its contested meanings across different groups, and the quest for a common civic category that recognizes all differences within the country.

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