

NARRATIVE IDENTITIES OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN LIVING IN TURKEY

TÜRKİYE'DE YAŞAYAN ULUSLARASRASI KADINLARI ANLATI KİMLİKLERİ

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ABSTRACT

Studies on narrative identity have been on the rise in recent decades. This study aims to analyze the narrative identities of international women living in Turkey. This study is qualitative and descriptive in nature based on a phenomenographic design within the interpretivist paradigm. This study involved five international women from different cultures that lived in Turkey for different periods of time. The results of the study show that the narrative identities of the participants were influenced by the aspects of the collectivist target culture. While hospitality, friendship, sincerity and social settings had a positive impact on their identity as women, motherhood, the dominance of a collectivist culture, the absence of an aesthetic urban design, the domination of manhood and the judgment of the people were questioned. In addition, the participants interpreted that the women in Turkey were expected to be confined to their homes, household chores and dealing with the guests such as neighbors, relatives and friends. The international women reported to have been largely disturbed by the violation of privacy. Temporality was also found to be another factor that affected their orientation and adaptation process into the target culture. However, in general, the participants reported that living in the Turkish culture had a favorable effect on their identity.

Keywords: Immigrants, Life Story, Narrative Identity, Phenomenography, Women.

ÖZET

Anlatı kimliği üzerine yapılan çalışmalar son yıllarda artış göstermektedir. Bu çalışma, Türkiye'de yaşayan uluslararası kadınların anlatsal kimliklerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışma yorumlayıcı paradigma içinde fenomenografik bir tasarıma dayalı olarak doğası gereği nitel ve betimseldir. Bu çalışma, farklı dönemlerde Türkiye'de yaşamış farklı kültürlerden beş uluslararası kadını içermektedir. Araştırmanın sonuçları, katılımcıların anlatsal kimliklerinin toplumsal hedef kültürün yönlerinden etkilendiğini göstermektedir. Misafirperverlik, dostluk, samimiyet ve sosyal ortamlar kadın kimliklerini olumlu etkilerken, annelik, kolektivist bir kültürün hakimiyeti, estetik bir kentsel tasarımın yokluğu, erkekliğin hakimiyeti ve insanların yargıları sorgulandı. Ayrıca katılımcılar, Türkiye'de kadınların evlerine hapsedilmesinin, ev işleriyle, komşu, akraba, arkadaş gibi misafirlerle ilgilenmesinin beklendiğini yorumlamışlardır. Uluslararası kadınların mahremiyet ihlalden büyük ölçüde rahatsız oldukları bildirildi. Geçiciliğin de hedef kültüre yönelim ve uyum sürecini etkileyen bir başka faktör olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Ancak genel olarak katılımcılar Türk kültürü içinde yaşamının kimliklerini olumlu yönde etkilediğini belirtmişlerdir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Göçmenler, Yaşam Öyküsü, Anlatı kimliği, Fenomenografi, Kadın.

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INTRODUCTION

Identity is an overwhelmingly complex structure that affects individuals at different levels. Social, cultural and psychological identities are main identity types. Narrative identity is composed of life stories ((Jasminwald & Ochberg, 1996). The culture and society in which individuals live affect their identities, and how individuals interpret social and cultural elements also affect their perception about individuals, class, gender, groups, communities and societies (Bal, 1985; Schiffren, 1996; McAdams, 1993). Narratives help individuals understand interpret and shape their identities in a spatiotemporal axis (Yoon & Park, 2012). Stories transform into themes, categories and personal histories. The self is composed of both permanent and dynamic elements. Self is constantly exposed to new experiences in social life. Narrative identity is also a plot that contains the connected and interlinked series of social events. Narrating life stories also provide a coherent sense regarding what they do, how they deal with and who they are (Yuen, 2008). Therefore, personal experience narrative is a powerful mechanism that informs both narrators themselves and addressees about how they make meaning out of their experiences, organize their identity, related event taking place around them to their self, create their reflective practices, engage themselves in social practices and perceive themselves in a certain space and time. These relations and actions in narrative identity are closely related to autobiographical memories that help constitute narrative scripts which may contribute to the understanding of a coherent self-identity and its relation with the wider society and social practices (Wilson & Ross, 2003). In addition, there is a close relationship between categorization of life experiences and special contexts that they live in. De Fina (2003: 18) also emphasizes that ‘categories defining people’s identity are seen as locally occasioned and made relevant through specific orientations displayed by interactants in interactional contexts and negotiated with their interlocutors’.

Kazmierska (2006) expresses that the narrative identities of immigrants become more fragile, dynamic and changeable. When individuals enter a new culture, their cultural and social identity is affected on different levels (Shapiro & Atallah-Gutiérrez, 2020). In addition, they are naturally tempted to question their identities, revise their autobiographical memories in their original cultures, compare their present identity in the target culture with that in the source culture and strive to find a common ground to feel safe (Kazmierska, 2006; Shapiro & Atallah-Gutiérrez, 2020). However, inhabiting a target culture often results in multiple interpretations and may lead to some disturbances in individuals that they cannot sometimes explain. Therefore, temporality becomes significant in that individuals can comprehend life events in a coherent manner (Strauss, 2006). In addition, temporality is one of the most important factors which can influence immigrants’ orientation and adaptation process in the target culture. Another important issue is the gender of immigrants and the state of women as immigrants in a collectivist culture where male dominance is prevalent. Strauss (1969) emphasizes that identity is constantly exposed to changes by striving to retain a coherent sense of self. Changes take place when there are turning points, peak and nadir experiences. These transformations might be experienced more intensively in the target culture. Individuals may question their social, cultural and personal identity to adjust self in a new context (Kazmierska, 2006). Strauss (1969) also articulates that new possibilities of identity are explored and accommodated whereas the acculturation process may take time for women immigrants to orient themselves to the new culture. For some women, a new culture may mean new economic opportunities while for other women being in a different culture may denote personal, sexual or educational freedom (Berr et al., 2019; Espin, 1995). Immigrants often find themselves in different specific contexts and discourses which also shape their identity in interaction with others. De Fina (2003) also articulates that situations and group affiliations also bring some constraints as well as opportunities:

...immigrants attribute different implications to ethnic identity depending on the discourse activity and the story world evoked, and that these implications are open to interactional negotiation. As in the case of personal and group identity in general, specific discourse occasions provide an arena for the construction and reflection of images about oneself and others. The study of identification in narrative discourse affords the possibility to analyze the way categories are used by specific groups in discourse and also to discern elements of these representations that may have greater stability than others, together with points of conflict and negotiation. In fact we have seen that in narratives where others were ethnically characterized, certain patterns relating to roles, actions and identities were emerging. (p.184)

These statements show that specific discourse occasions act as the main mechanisms that shape identities of immigrants. How immigrant women represent themselves and are represented by the individuals of the target culture influences both personal and group identity. Van Dijk (1993) notes that identity is constituted through social meaning and shared representations in local contexts. However, identity is not restricted to only these specific and local discourses. Narrating identity and narrative scripts also provide a platform where immigrants can address a wider society and place their identity into this wider societal structure, which allows them to constitute a coherent sense of identity. If women from individualistic cultures move into a collectivist culture, they may experience difficulties and challenges that they may encounter (Kagitcibasi, 1996). However, these conflicts may enhance the flexibility of their identity or hinder their identity capability (Yoon & Park, 2012). Therefore, it is important to bear in mind that multifarious factors affect identities of immigrants.

This study aims to examine the views of international women living in Turkey on how they see Turkish women, themselves and how they situate themselves in the context of Turkey. Therefore, a life story protocol composed of 13 items was given to five international women who were asked to share their experiences, autobiographical stories and perceptions of themselves, their construal, personal constructs and Turkish women because womanhood plays a central role in this study.

METHOD

This study is qualitative and descriptive in nature based on phenomenographic design within the interpretivist paradigm. This design and paradigm acknowledge that subjectivity is pivotal and central in human understanding of the world, social events and experience. Phenomenography is not based on dichotomic, binary and dualistic relations but on a continuum and contingencies (Marton, 1981). Individuals' experience is prioritized and emphasized. Therefore, different kinds of interviews are selected as data collection tools. Description, interpretation and comparison of the data are taken into consideration (Marton, 1986). Narrative analysis of identity also provides a tool to understand phenomenographic perspectives of individuals in a certain context or culture (Riessman, 1993). This study also interpreted the experiences of five different women from different countries. Three of them were married to Turkish men. Four of them are still living in Turkey except that Jasmin is back to the USA.

Table 1. Personal background of the participants

Participants	Origin of Country	Age	Duration	Marital status	Reasons
Jasmin	USA	65	5 years	Married	Charity
Julia	Russia	32	15 years	Married	Marriage
Sara	Syria	25	4 years	Single	Student
Sandra	Netherlands	55	2 years	Married	Marriage
Olga	Kazakhstan	30	10 years	Married	Marriage

Jasmine

Jasmine is an American who came to Turkey to help hearing-impaired children to learn Turkish sing language and live in Turkey for more than five years. She, her husband and children produced several projects about these children. She can speak Turkish at pre-intermediate level. She also taught English to the Turkish students in the mid-south of Turkey. She lived with her family in an apartment building. She has also been to different parts of Turkey.

Julia

Julia is a Russian woman who visited Turkey to work temporally. However, after she met a Turkish man in the south of Turkey, they got married. Julia has been working in Turkey for more than 15 years. She can speak Turkish, English and French fluently. They have a daughter who is a bilingual of Turkish and Russian.

Sara

Sara is a Syrian woman who had to settle into Turkey because of the war. Sara is single. She completed her BA in communication sciences and is doing her MA now. She can speak Turkish and English fluently.

Sandra

Sandra is a Dutch woman married to a Turkish man. She can speak Turkish and English fluently. Sandra lived in the southern parts of Turkey. She has been in Turkey for eight years. Sandra has BA and MA in library science.

Olga

Olga is a Russian woman who visited Turkey to work temporally. However, after she met a Turkish man in the south of Turkey, they got married. Olga has been working in Turkey for more than eight years. Olga has BA in English and French studies. She can speak Turkish, English and French fluently.

Procedure

An open-ended questionnaire was prepared by the researchers by adapting life story interview by McAdams (1998). McAdams (1998) identified 19 items to reveal the life stories of individuals in detail. This study adapted only 13 items in accordance with the content of life story interview. The nature of the study was introduced to the participants who were given brief information about what narrative identity was and what each item in the open-ended questionnaire meant. After each item was explained in detail, they were told to write their experience within a four-week period. Before starting to write their own experiences, they were given some examples about how to express their ideas and what to focus on while writing their life stories. The participants were told that the emphasis should be given to their identities. Therefore, the main elements of the narrative identity such as episodes, imagery, settings, themes, turning points and temporality were explained to them.

Table 2. Key scenes and themes in accordance with McAdams' life story protocol

No	Key scenes	Item identification
	High point	Describe a scene that stands out as positive
	Low point	Describe a scene that stands out as negative
	Turning point	Identify certain key moments
	Positive childhood memory	Describe childhood or your teen-aged years – that stands out as especially <i>positive</i> in some way
	Negative childhood memory	Describe childhood or your teen-aged years – that stands out as especially <i>negative</i> in some way
	Vivid childhood memory	Describe adulthood years – that stands out as especially <i>vivid</i> in some way
	Wisdom event	Describe an event in your life in which you displayed wisdom
	Religious, Spiritual, Mystical Experience	Identify an episode or moment in which you felt a sense of the transcendent or sacred, a sense of God or some almighty or ultimate force, or a feeling of oneness with nature, the world, or the universe.
	The next chapter	Describe what you see to be the next chapter in your life
	Dreams, Hopes, and Plans for the Future	Describe your plans, dreams, or hopes for the future
	Life project	Describe a life project is something that you have been working on and plan to work on in the future chapters of your life story.
	Life challenge	Describe what you now consider to be the greatest single challenge you have faced in your life.
	Health	Describe a scene or period in your life, including the present time, wherein you or a close family member confronted a major <i>health</i> problem, challenge, or crisis
	Loss	Describe the greatest interpersonal loss you have experienced.
	Failure or regret	Describe the greatest failure or regret you have experienced
	Religious/Ethical Values	Describe in a nutshell your religious beliefs and values,
	Political/Social Values	Describe a particular political/social point of view
	Change, Development of Religious and Political Views	Tell the story of how your religious, moral, and/or political views and values have developed over time
	Single Value	Describe the most important value in human living?
	Life theme	Describe the major theme in your life story

McAdam's life story protocol is adapted and given to the participants. This protocol deals with different events such as turning points, nadir experiences, various values, future projection, reflection on the past, awareness of the present, questioning the identity, comparing the events from a temporal perspective. In addition, social, political, religious, ethical and social values are narrated and questioned. Childhood stories and memories are told by focusing on identity. In addition, negative and positive perspectives are brought to the fore so that participants can better describe their identities. Participants are also asked to prioritize one of the most important life themes and values, which enable them to reflect upon on their identity. Although the main protocol contains 19 items, 13 of these items were used in this present study. The adapted items are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Key scenes and themes

No	Key scenes	Item identification
1.	Typical day	Write a typical day in your life as a woman in Turkey
2.	Peak experience	Write a peak experience that you had in Turkey
3.	Nadir experience	Write a nadir experience that you had in Turkey
4.	Turning point	Write one of the turning points in your life in Turkey
5.	First impressions	Describe your first impressions about in Turkey when you first arrived (your earliest memory) and what has changed later about your experiences
6.	Stereotypes	Write a stereotypical Turkish woman's day based on your observations
7.	Social expectations	Describe Turkish society's expectations from you Compare them to your own home country expectations
8.	Cultural comparisons	What are some differences and similarities that you observe about your culture and Turkish culture?
9.	Challenges/solutions	Describe a solution to a life challenge in Turkey. Describe people's assistance to you. Describe the impact of this challenge on you
10.	Difficulties	Describe some difficulties of being a woman in Turkey
11.	Positive	Describe some positive things about being a woman in Turkey
12.	Experiences	Describe the experiences in Turkey that affect your identity?
13.	Other remarks	Describe any other life stories in Turkey you desire to.

RESULTS

The overall findings of the study show that the participants expressed that living in Turkey was satisfying and had a positive impact on their identity and compared their values with those of Turkey. Therefore, the participants criticized some cultural aspects in Turkey. The elements that differed from their original ones were that Turkey prioritized motherhood, womanhood at home, collective identity and food culture. In addition, the absence of aesthetic structures, the paucity of art galleries, exhibitions, museums and book shops were articulated to emphasize that Turkish culture lacked these elements. Hospitality of the Turkish people was brought to the fore and affected their identity and orientation positively.

Findings related to typical day

All of the participants had different typical day experiences. Jasmin stated that she was very busy all day long because she was teaching English to make her living and to support a non-governmental organization that she and her family members founded. Sandra said that she lost her job after a five-year business life at a university and was a full homemaker. Olga stated that she was very busy studying French language teaching and teaching English to make her living. Sara said that she was majoring in communication sciences to find a job in the future. Julia remarked that she had a regular and repetitive life practice since she has a daughter now.

Findings related to experience and turning points

Each participant in the study had different experiences and turning points that affected their identity on different levels. They interpreted these peak and nadir events in a different manner. One of the participants, Sandra, encountered a difficult event, which was the loss of her job. This peak, nadir and turning point had a negative impact on her identity in Turkey. Since her close family members, relatives and friends were far away from her, she failed to overcome this loss, which influenced her identity. Another participant, Sara, also led an unhappy for a while since she could not find a job. However, she was able to get into a university program in Turkey. The other three participants had positive experiences since they were not confronted with enormous losses.

Sandra : One of the, definitely nadir experiences in my life story, was my working experience at the Akdeniz University, and finally the loss of my job. Unfortunately, I experienced several mobbing events and after five years my manager (a German Turk) did not undertake any serious measures concerning the prolongation of my annual contract. I informed him that some administrative procedures had to be completed, but he did not respond. Deep down I knew he preferred the son of a German friend for my job. Finally, he texted (!) me that my contract was not renewed and did not even make the effort to thank me for my five years' serious and proven successful work.

Sara: I was rejected by many people at the beginning and could not find a job at all. I did not have enough Turkish. Therefore, I could not get my ideas across.

Olga: I was very lucky. I found a job very easily and studied in a French program at a Turkish university.

Jasmine : I was always busy as an American. I taught English for years. I found a teaching job very easily.

Julia: I came to Turkey to work temporarily. I found a job in a hotel easily and have continued to live here for 15 years.

Findings related to first impressions and stereotypes

The participants' first impressions differed from each other since their purposes were varied. Two of the participants, Sandra and Jasmine, were surprised by what they encountered in Turkey. However, the other three participants expressed that Turkey appealed to them greatly. The first impressions were about the design of the city and people's behaviors towards them. All of the participants stated that the design of the city was disorganized and lacked art-centric facilities. However, in terms of social relationships, they were satisfied with how Turkish people treated them. Therefore, they reported that their identity was positively affected by this friendly approach and hospitality. For all the participants, a stereotype of a Turkish woman is a person who does household chores, is in the center of a family and caring for her husband and children. In addition, the participants reported that motherhood is a core quality and is highly respected.

Sandra: I first arrived in Turkey, more specifically in Adana, in 1998. My first impression did not at all meet my expectations. Being used to Italian, Spanish and French Mediterranean country sides and cities, I was quite surprised by chaotic city, the lack of architectural esthetics and the (in my opinion) absence of beauty in general

Sara : Adana looked like my city in Syria. Therefore, I did not experience any problem. My first impressions were positive. However, the city and public transportation were a little disorganized.

Olga: The first impression was that city was "low". There isn't any skyscraper or any high building . Some streets were really narrow and Turkish people drive like crazy. Many people live in detached houses not in an apartment buildings . There is no central heating and hot water. Fruit and vegetables are really cheap. My first impression about locals was positive. They are really hospitable and friendly people.

Jasmine: I came to Istanbul from Indonesia, so some of my first impressions were that women wore jeans to work (Indonesian dress is skirt and blouse), Istanbul had much less traffic than Jakarta, and I felt like I was surrounded by "foreigners"—ie. Europeans, white people—because I was used to seeing mostly Asians around me and I looked upon European/Americans as "bulays" which means foreigner. What changed? I got used to

wearing jeans everywhere, traffic in Istanbul became much worse, and I got used to seeing Turkish/Caucasian people instead of Asians.

Julia : I loved Turkey and Antalya very much. My first impressions were great. I thought that I could live in Turkey forever. Antalya was my first city. Therefore, it looked very international for me.

Findings related to social expectations and cultural comparisons

The participants' expectations from the target country produced different interpretations. Three of the participants were aware that they would work and study in Turkey. Therefore, their social expectations were, to a great extent, fulfilled. The other two participants did not expect to live in Turkey for a long time and had to live in Turkey for several reasons. Therefore, they reported that they felt frustrated and disappointed. However, in time, as they learned Turkish, they reported that they got accustomed to Turkish social life. All of the participants compared their cultures to Turkish culture. Only one of the participants was less satisfied than the other women since she believed that her culture had more opportunities for her on a social and psychological level. The fact that the three women found a job and studied at a Turkish university enabled them to have a positive self of their identity. However, one of the participants were able to develop her Turkish language at an intermediate level and said that she had some problems finding a job and expressing herself to the Turkish community.

Sandra: My expectations about how I should live my life are more or less based on the stereotypes I described above. Of course I realize these are stereotypes but stereotypes more or less contain a certain amount of truth. What I observed is that women marry at a rather young age, often before they even completed their (university) education

Sara: My social expectations were that I could be a part of a Turkish social group. They also expect me to behave like them. I am Syrian. Therefore, they expect similar behaviors.

Olga: Since I have been married for 6 years Turkish society expect me to have kids and to take care of the house more. Some of the women that I talk to get surprise that I don't cook or clean the house every day, that usually me or together with my husband we go out in the evening. Our lifestyle can hardly be called as typical marriage couple. But majority get really proud that I work and I'm financially independent from my husband. Compare to my home country I cannot see any difference because a woman is usually expected to have a family or at least to be married.

Jasmine: The big difference I observe is that Turkish women generally keep their houses really clean, either doing it themselves or hiring someone to clean. If my house is not immaculate, it will reflect on me, no matter who made the mess or how busy I am. In America, it doesn't matter that much. Also there are times where you are expected to dress more formally, like visiting a government office. Some places in America are like that, but in southern California, people wear shorts and flip flops for almost everything if they want to. Besides that, I can do whatever I want in Turkey.

Julia: Turkish society expects me to marry a Turkish man and have a child as soon possible. Since I am a Russian woman, they do not expect me to behave like a Russian woman. However, as a woman, I show my reactions to make them feel that I am from a different culture.

Findings related to challenges and solutions

The challenges that each participant encountered in the target country were solved in different ways. Since three of the participants were married to Turkish men, they managed to solve their problems more easily. However, one of the participants married to a Turkish man was dismissed from the job, which influenced her identity adversely for a long time. She reported that her husband supported her psychologically. However, on a social level she was unable to receive the desired support because her close friends and family members were in the source country. Thus, one of the participants constantly questioned her identity. The other two participants coped with the challenges. Since they were not affiliated with a Turkish family, they had to make greater efforts to find solutions to the problems that they met. Both of them expressed that Turkish people's desire to help the women influenced their identity positively.

Sandra: After my job loss, I felt very sad, not only because of the lack of recognition for my qualities but also due to the loss of my economic independency. I lost my confidence in the system and had to diverge my focus from a professional life to, with the support of my husband, a life full-time at home.

Sara : Some Turkish people asked me why I came to Turkey and could not reply to them in Turkish because I did not have sufficient Turkish. As I learned Turkish in time, I managed to deal with this problem.

Olga: I always have my family by my side who are willing to help me in any difficult situations. Honestly , it depends on the situation. If it's a daily problem like paying or receiving some order than nowadays I try to solve myself. Before when my Turkish was really weak my husband helped me with almost everything. I worried about nothing. I also gain a bunch of friends who are also ready to give me a hand. Moreover, Turkish people are altruistic people and I know that I can ask any stranger on the street and without any hesitation he can help him.

Jasmine: There were a lot of challenges in Turkey, especially back in the 90's when I arrived and before shopping malls were common, it was a challenge just to figure out where to buy something like a sleeping bag, or even sewing materials. It was a challenge to figure out visas and legal business. Learning the language was a challenge. All of these challenges made me a stronger person, and taught me how to solve problems. Whereas if I had only lived in the US as a US citizen, everything is organized and easy, you don't have to think.

Julia: I came to Turkey to work for a while. I did not encounter big challenges. Turkish friends helped me to solve my problems.

Findings related to positive events and experiences

All of the participants expressed that they generally had positive experiences due to Turkish people's inclusive attitudes and behaviors. Language barrier, the loss of jobs, the violation of privacy, the design of the city and some Turkish individuals' intervention in the immigrant women's lives were among the negative memories and nadir experiences that they had. However, the socialization process for the participants was facilitated in the collectivist Turkish culture. Therefore, it can be interpreted that social relations and social dialogue were pivotal and central factors that had a positive impact on their identity. The participants expressed that the women in Turkey were respected and valued. As international women, they reported that they received more respect from the Turkish people in social settings. They also stated that they were invited and entertained by some Turkish families, which helped them to feel safe and secure in the Turkish society.

Sandra: Compared with the society of my home country I over all did not notice more positive things about being a woman in Turkey but I noticed more respect for mothers and motherhood. These aspects in a woman's life are more underestimated in my home country. Perhaps it is for foreign women easier to have social contacts in Turkey when they are married with a Turkish man and consequently have Turkish relatives. With the collective culture in mind and the large number of relatives, family can be very supportive (and I appreciate that!) but their involvement can also be a corset.

Sara : I could not find a job. I could not communicate with people. However, in time I got accustomed to this culture. I made very good friends. My teachers and friends helped me a lot.

Olga: A Turkish woman knows her value . She craves not only for attention, but also for some stable life. It's really rare case that a Turkish woman would marry a guy without money or at least with bright future. In Russia for example money is not the main criteria of getting married. But here family will not give their daughter unless their sure about the financial status of her future life. Another positive point is those women don't get involved into the problems out of the family. Money, broken car, bills doesn't bother her. All she needs to worry is inside of the house. Indeed it eases her life in a certain way.

Jasmine: Maybe finance is not always easy, but everything else is good! We also love being able to honk the horn when driving, without being offensive (like in USA). That's why I love Turkey—all those things.

Julia : After Russia where I experienced a lot of problems, Turkey is my heaven. I really adore Turkey. I do not want to leave this country.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Anderson (1993) mentions that imagined communities are created in the minds of individuals through discourses that affect people's lives. This understanding can be applied to individuals that come from collectivist and individualistic cultures (Kağıtcıbası, 1996). This study shows that Turkey as an imagined community by the participants but one of them was a place where they could lead their lives happily. Thus, a positive identity was re-formed, re-invented and regulated by the four individuals. This study mainly aimed to examine the narrative identity of five international women living in Turkey. Four of the participants emphasized the importance of individualistic culture that they came from and the difficulty of living in a collectivistic culture (Kağıtcıbası, 1996; Luke, 1973). However, they also mentioned that collectivistic culture contains important aspects that could influence women's identity positively. These elements were comprised of hospitality, friendship, sincerity, altruistic behaviors, inviting attitudes, a good health system and rich cuisine culture. However, they developed a critical perspective towards Turkish people's intrusion into their privacy, the dominance of men, the repression of women, the burdens that women have to bear, the absence of aesthetic urban design, the paucity of art galleries and books shops. Four of the participants shared the fact that they could live in Turkey until the end of their life since they managed to establish a good social relationship with others around them. However, one of the participants expressed that she had better social relationship in her own country. Thus, this study shows that social relations are one of the important factors that affect their identity. Their narrative scripts showed that their lives were facilitated due to Turkish people's helping hands and generosity and that their identity was sometimes adversely influenced owing to the violation of the women's privacy. Since the participants often found themselves in friendly social dialogues, they found the opportunity of adjusting their identity through interaction (Berry, 1993).

De Fina (2003: 185) also mentions that 'group identity can be exclusively reduced to or equated with shared representations since identity is a process constructed within social practices and subject to continuous evolutions and modifications' and adds that 'identities are not merely mental concepts, but the processes of construction and negotiation of identities certainly draw from and contribute to mental representations'. This study also shows that group identity is a significant factor in the formation of a positive re-adjusted identity. As long as social relations ranging from education to business life are enhanced and positively reinforced, then immigrants develop a favorable sense of identity (Berry, 1993; Bruner, 1991). Since one of the participants was dismissed from the job, she reported that she had to question her identity in Turkey for a long time. In addition, another participant in the study mentioned that she was often hindered from entering social groups at the beginning and was judged about her state in Turkey. The women immigrants in this study were interrogated doubted and judged by the Turkish social communities about why they were in Turkey. After these first shocks, it was found that they developed quicker adaptation strategies. These narrative scripts give us the clue that conflicting discourses in a social context regulate, transform and change identities (Jasminwald & Ochberg, 1996).

This study shows that when identities are narrated, individuals are confronted with social dialogues that shape their identities (Holmes, 1997; Kroskrity, 2000; Linde, 1993). Social relations, interaction and dialogue facilitate or harden women's identities. Immigrant women may experience serious difficulties in a collectivist culture since their privacy might be violated or their personal lives may be controlled or supervised by others. In the context of Turkey, the issue of privacy had to be suppressed by the participants. The fact that womanhood and motherhood were prioritized and dominant in Turkey was questioned by the participants since the heavy burdens of the women were overwhelming for them.

Immigrant women are also expected to show Turkish women's behaviors and acculturate themselves by taking Turkish women as the main criteria. Immigrant women may be said to experience challenges and difficulties in a culture where men are dominant and act as decision-makers. Future studies can compare immigrant women from individualistic and collectivist cultures in order to understand how their identities are affected. Another issue that needs to be investigated is that how identities of immigrant men, women and LGBTQs from different backgrounds can be shaped and affected. How immigrant women affect the wider society of the target culture can be also researched to see whether diversity is positively reinforced through the inclusion of international women from different cultures.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest

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