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Feeling Half-Half? Exploring Relational Variation of Turkish-Heritage Young Adults' Cultural Identity Compatibility and Conflict in Austria

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ABSTRACT

Growing up in multicultural environments, Turkish-heritage individuals in Europe face specific challenges in combining their multiple cultural identities to form a coherent sense of self. Drawing from social identity complexity, this study explores four modes of combining cultural identities and their variation in relational contexts. Problem-centered interviews with Turkish-heritage young adults in Austria revealed the preference for complex, supranational labels, such as multicultural. Furthermore, most participants described varying modes of combining cultural identities over time and across relational contexts. Social exclusion experiences throughout adolescence related to perceived conflict of cultural identities, whereas multicultural peer groups supported perceived compatibility of cultural identities. Findings emphasize the need for complex, multidimensional approaches to study ethnic minorities' combination of cultural identities.

KEYWORDS

Cultural identity compatibility; multicultural; relational identity; social identity complexity; Turkish minority

Although the Turkish-heritage second generation in Europe is an important part of the urban population, little research has specifically focused on the way they acculturate (Groenewold, de Valk, & Van Ginneken, 2014). For ethnic-minority youth, acculturation relates to academic adjustment as well as psychological adaptation (Schachner, Van De Vijver, & Noack, 2014). Moreover, acculturation is closely linked to changes in cultural identity, the subjective sense of belonging to a culture (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001). Growing up in multicultural environments, many second-generation individuals internalize and combine two or more cultural identities to form a coherent sense of cultural self (Benet-Martínez, 2012; Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martínez, 2000). Importantly, they might perceive these cultural identities to be compatible or conflicting (see Huynh, Nguyen, & Benet-Martínez, 2011, for a review). In this study, then, we explore the lived experiences of Turkish-heritage young adults in Austria and illustrate different ways in which they manage, combine, and experience multiple cultural identities.

Social identity theory argues that individuals compare their own ethnic or cultural group with other social groups, striving to maintain or advance a positive perception of their own social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). However, belonging to several cultural groups can be negatively associated with subjective well-being and feelings of belonging when perceiving social identities as conflicting (Benish-Weisman, 2009; Navarrete & Jenkins, 2011) or, in contrast, improve well-being and intercultural contact when perceiving social identities as compatible (Cheng et al., 2008). Healthy and well-adjusted individuals can engage in societal and political processes and promote positive intercultural relations. But still, we know little about how individuals perceive support for cultural identity compatibility or conflict in different relational contexts, meaning the interactions with

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people from various relationships (Kiang & Fuligni, 2009). Therefore, in this study we demonstrate how participants' stories of combining cultural identities varied depending on relational contexts, such as the family and peers. We also utilize participants' personal experiences to discuss how participants' cultural identities in adulthood are connected to their experiences of cultural identity compatibility or conflict during adolescence.

Turkish-heritage young adults in Austria

Turkish labor migration to Western Europe goes back to the early 1960s and 1970s. The *Gastarbeiter* agreements, signed between Austria and multiple countries including Turkey in 1964, facilitated guest workers to immigrate and balance out the shortage of workers in Western Europe at the time (Wets, 2006). Currently, 21.4% of the Austrian population have a "migration background," the official legal term for individuals with both parents born outside of Austria (Statistik Austria, 2016). Despite the large migrant population, Austrian mainstream attitudes toward migrants and their descendants have been unwelcoming on a political as well as societal level (Wets, 2006). Compared to other Western democracies, Austria scores low on multicultural policy indices—for example, by having restrictive citizenship requirements (Koopmans, 2013)—and has shown rising anti-migrant attitudes as well as increasing popularity of right-wing movements (Podobnik, Jusup, Kovac, & Stanley, 2017).

In Austria, 15% of the migrant population is represented by Turkish migrants and their descendants (Statistik Austria, 2016). In the European Union, the Turkish community is the largest with roots from a non-member country (Cornell, Knaus, & Scheich, 2012). Still, few qualitative studies have investigated how Turkish-heritage individuals in Central Europe construct their cultural identities in light of high national stigmatization (Scheibelhofer, 2007; Yanasmayan, 2016).

Despite being a large minority in Austria, as in other European countries, adolescents with Turkish as a primary language represent only a small minority (2.9%) of the student body in secondary academic track schools (Statistik Austria, 2017). Therefore, studies on Turkish-heritage youth in Central Europe have mainly focused on students facing educational disparities (e.g., Söhn & Özcan, 2006). Research has largely neglected the group of highly educated Turkish-minority youth and their particular challenges in combining different cultural identities. On the one hand, in rather monocultural schools they are likely to encounter stronger pressures to assimilate into the national culture compared to their minority peers in more diverse, vocational track schools. Furthermore, in predominantly middle-class academic track schools with a politically driven agenda to emphasize citizenship, European values, or inclusion, Turkish-heritage students are more likely to emphasize multidimensional identities than students in schools with a predominantly working-class student population (Faas, 2009). On the other hand, like other minority members, they face the constant negotiation of cultural values between relational contexts, such as the school, family, multicultural peer groups, and neighborhoods (Bauer, Loomis, & Akkari, 2013). In the current study, we therefore focus on the lived experience of Turkish-heritage individuals with high formal education in Austria.

Combining multiple cultural identities

Berry's bidimensional model (Berry, 1997) of acculturation suggests that individuals learning and adapting to a new culture negotiate between the dominant culture (i.e., the mainstream culture of the receiving country) and their heritage culture (i.e., the culture of their ethnic group and ancestors). Following this approach, Groenewold et al. (2014) found that most of the Turkish-heritage second generation across Europe maintain an orientation toward both cultures, as opposed to only one culture or neither. However, in European countries where Turkish-heritage individuals perceive high ethnic discrimination, such as Germany for example, Turkish minority members show lower levels of bicultural orientation compared to those in Finland, France, Sweden, or the Netherlands (Vedder, Sam, & Liebkind, 2007) as well as a lower dominant-culture identification compared to other ethnic minorities over time (Diehl, Fischer-Neumann, & Mühlau, 2016).

Scholars have recently emphasized the need to move beyond the bicultural approach when investigating acculturative changes (e.g., Ward & Geeraert, 2016). Studies from Belgium and Switzerland, for example, show that in multicultural environments such as highly diverse neighborhoods and peer networks, individuals may draw from not just two, but multiple cultures (Bauer et al., 2013; Van De Vijver, Blommaert, Gkoumasi, & Stogianni, 2015). Thus, we investigate how individuals experience and combine cultural identities in monocultural as well as multicultural environments in Austria, including cultural identifications with cultures beyond the dominant and heritage culture.

The concept of social identity complexity (Roccas & Brewer, 2002) acknowledges that members of multiple cultural groups might perceive a high overlap or dissimilarity of cultural identities. Thus, they might combine several group memberships into a single, less complex group identification (e.g., Austrian-Turkish) or maintain a more complex identity structure, accepting differences between their social identities. To illustrate, Roccas and Brewer (2002) introduced four modes of combining cultural identities: representing low cultural identity complexity, individuals show (a) “hyphenated identities” at the intersection of two cultural groups (e.g., identifying as Austrian-Turkish and combining unique properties of both cultures into one exclusive identity) or (b) “cultural dominance” when one cultural identity is subordinated to the other (e.g., investing solely in the Turkish identity and social group and withdrawing from the Austrian). Representing high cultural identity complexity, individuals show (c) “compartmentalization” when they consciously activate different cultural identities depending on the social setting (e.g., alternating between feeling more Turkish at home and more Austrian in school) or (d) “integrated biculturalism” where membership, values, and norms of cultural groups are merged into one entity while maintaining a distinct representation of both cultures (e.g., acknowledging differences between the Turkish and Austrian culture and still identifying with both in the most inclusive form). Roccas and Brewer (2002) hypothesize that all modes may vary in different periods of life, especially in times of stress or insecurity, and thus may reflect individual differences as well as situational conditions, such as relational contexts.

Cultural identities in relational context

Developmental theories have stressed the importance of context for identity development (Erikson, 1968; Phinney, 1989). Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) have emphasized the influence of principal settings for shaping competence and personality, namely the family, childcare arrangements, schools, peer groups, and neighborhoods. Within these settings, close relational contexts are crucial for identity development (Galliher & Kerpelman, 2012). Studies on minority adolescents and young adults from Switzerland, Wales, and the United States have shown that cultural identification varied across relational contexts, such as parents, same- and different-ethnicity peers, or teachers at school (Bauer et al., 2013; Hendry, Mayer, & Kloep, 2007; Kiang & Fuligni, 2009; Way, Santos, Niwa, & Kim-Gervey, 2008). However, we need to further understand *how* multicultural young adults negotiate different cultural identities within and between relational contexts and how this is based on the subjective meaning of past relational experiences.

Qualitative studies and personal narratives can offer content-oriented perspectives, adding lived experiences and context to complex topics, such as identity development (Syed, 2015). However, few recent qualitative studies have investigated the combination and negotiation of multicultural or multiracial identities of second-generation individuals in the Central European context (Bauer et al., 2013; Hubbard & Utsey, 2015). This qualitative study thus aimed to deepen the understanding for how highly educated Turkish-heritage individuals as part of the third-largest cultural minority group in Austria combine and negotiate multiple cultural identities. This was achieved by applying an exploratory, qualitative approach to examine their personal narratives, by investigating their firsthand experiences of compatible and conflicting cultural identities based on the four modes of social identity complexity (Roccas & Brewer,

2002), and by looking into preceding situational factors, namely experiences in relational contexts throughout adolescence. These considerations resulted in the following research questions:

RQ1: How do Turkish-heritage young adults experience compatibility and conflict of multiple cultural identities?

RQ2: How did experiences of cultural identity compatibility and conflict differ between and within relational contexts (e.g., family, peers) throughout adolescence and adulthood?

Methods

The researchers followed a phenomenological approach to emphasize the understanding of lived experiences and to focus on the interpretation of human interactions (Creswell, 2007). The analyses by the first author (researcher) were thus an interpretation of participants' narrations within the context of Austria.

Recruitment and participants

Based on our inclusion criteria (Robinson, 2014), we targeted young adults at the main age of social and cultural identity exploration and development (Arnett, 2014; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014) and with Turkish migrant background, meaning that both parents had been born in Turkey. Due to our focus on Turkish-heritage individuals with a high level of formal education, we aimed for participants with a completed academic track secondary school (German *Gymnasium* or Austrian *Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule*). The researcher approached three participants in a cultural institute in Vienna. To recruit the other participants, we used snowball sampling, asking members of the cultural institute to recruit more participants that fit the inclusion criteria.

The researcher conducted four interviews with women and two with men ($N = 6$). Following an idiographic approach to understand the meaning of subjective phenomena, the sample size was adequate because it allowed for variation within the *phenomenon* of interest, in this case the combination of cultural identities in relational contexts, as opposed to a variation within the *population* (Levitt, Motulsky, Wertz, Morrow, & Ponterotto, 2017). Two participants were born and raised in Western Germany and moved to Austria to study after having finished *Gymnasium*, the academic track school. Because they grew up in comparable historical contexts as the other four Austrian participants and because they met the inclusion criteria, they were included in the study. Participants were between 25 and 28 years of age, grew up in urban areas in Austria and Germany, and were Austrian or German citizens. All but one participant had completed academic track schools or held a university degree. All participants' parents had migrated to Austria or Western Germany in the 1980s. Participants' self-reported demographic characteristics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant self-reported demographics, cultural labels, and cultural pride.

Pseudonym	Sex	Age	Country of birth	Citizenship	Cultural labels	Dominant-culture pride	Heritage-culture pride
Aysun	Female	28	Germany	German	German-Turkish, human, multicultural	1	1
Betül	Female	25	Turkey	Austrian	Austrian, intercultural, Turkish, woman	3	3
Cem	Male	28	Austria	Austrian	Kurdish	1	5
Deniz	Male	27	Turkey	Austrian	European, social democrat	5	5
Esra	Female	26	Germany	German	Turkish, multicultural	1–2	3
Fatma	Female	25	Austria	Austrian	Austrian-Turkish, Muslim, Turkish	3	5

Note. The responses for dominant- and heritage-culture pride ranged on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*extremely proud*).

Role of the researcher

Interviews were conducted by the first author in German over a six-week period in Vienna. To enhance the potential for insight (Levitt et al., 2017), the researcher approached participants in a cultural institute in Vienna where she had worked and frequently attended events of the Turkish community. Despite her proximity to and familiarity with the community, the interviewer had an outsider position as a German without Turkish heritage. As shown in previous studies, this outsider position may have encouraged participants to extend their explanation about their heritage culture (Mielants & Weiner, 2015).

Procedure

Data collection

Before the interviews, participants were briefed about the tape recording and anonymity. All participants gave their informed consent prior to participating. To address the research questions, we used problem-centered interviews (Witzel, 2000), starting with a short questionnaire for socio-demographic data to facilitate the conversation and provide valuable context information for the interview (e.g., former school type or family structure). After collecting the sociodemographic information, a preformulated introductory question about general memories of their youth and school years generated storytelling. To further ensure methodological integrity in the rest of the interview (Levitt et al., 2017), nonleading, open-ended questions were used to limit the effects of researchers' assumptions about the phenomenon. The Bicultural Ethnic Identities Interview (Marks, Patton, & García Coll, 2011) helped as a structural guideline to ensure comparability and transparency but was treated flexibly enough to follow the inner logic of each interview and to individually react to the topics provided by the interviewees (Witzel, 2000). Open-ended questions covered cultural identification, family cultural history and routines, and academic and peer-based experiences in schools and neighborhoods throughout adolescence, thus tapping into the principal settings for development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). In addition, dominant- and heritage-culture pride were assessed with one question each on a 5-point Likert scale, with scores ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*extremely proud*).

To improve fidelity to the subject during data collection, the interviewer created research memos to identify, reflect on, and minimize the effects of assumptions and personal perspectives on the data and to maintain a clear representation of the studied phenomenon (Levitt et al., 2017). Furthermore, during the interviews, participants were constantly encouraged to expand their stories through narrative inquiries, followed by ad hoc questions to clarify participants' statements at the end of each interview. Interviews ranged from 65 to 140 minutes in length. After that, all participants voluntarily joined in tape-recorded, unstructured follow-up conversations (participant checks) with the interviewer, lasting between 10 and 110 minutes. To enhance trustworthiness, these conversations enabled participants to expand on topics apart from the interview guidelines and supported fidelity by broadening the researcher's perspective on the phenomenon of interest (Levitt et al., 2017). The conversations also included a briefing about the research purpose and the possibility to ask clarification questions for participants.

Data analysis

The names of all participants were changed to ensure anonymity. The program F4 facilitated verbatim transcription of the tape recordings. We used the program MAXQDA 11 to conduct qualitative content analysis of the data (Mayring, 2000). Based on the first interview, the researcher created a coding agenda for categories, including definitions, examples, and coding rules. Categories were developed deductively, on the basis of previous knowledge, as well as inductively, derived from the transcription material and memos. Categories were revised after the coding of each interview (formative check of reliability) and again after the final examination of the text (summative check of

reliability). To enhance fidelity during data analysis (Levitt et al., 2017), participant checks after each interview further included paraphrasing and questions about comprehension by the researcher to examine how well her preliminary interpretations represented participants' meanings (Morrow, 2005). After coding the last interview, all coded segments and categories were presented to and discussed with a research assistant who had been trained by discussing the study goals and reading literature relevant to the research questions. To illustrate research findings, the researcher translated exemplary coded segments from German into English. To ensure language accuracy and comprehensiveness, translations were checked and corrected by a native English-speaking colleague with high German-language proficiency whose area of expertise is identity development of youth of immigrant and Turkish heritage.

Results

We were interested in the ways individuals combine cultural identities within and between relational contexts to foster perceived compatibility or conflict of cultural identities. We found a total of three categories: (1) modes of combining cultural identities, (2) relational contexts supporting cultural identity compatibility, and (3) relational contexts fostering cultural identity conflict. The categories each contained three or four subcategories, with a total of 163 coded segments. The results will be reported in the order of research questions. The following sections utilize exemplary coded segments drawn from across interviews to elucidate categories and subcategories.

Modes of combining cultural identities

Being asked about cultural pride, two participants indicated a strong heritage-culture orientation and pride and only a little or no pride in the dominant culture (Table 1). The other four participants expressed equal orientation toward both cultures and similar amounts of dominant- and heritage-culture pride. All but one participant utilized cultural labels beyond their heritage culture and provided stories of varying perceived compatibility and conflict of cultural identities throughout adolescence and adulthood (RQ1). Each participant provided between one and four different modes of combining their cultural identities (Figure 1), depending on time, place, and relational contexts of particular experiences. Compared to female participants, male participants only shared stories of one or two different modes of combining cultural identities. In the following sections, we illustrate the four modes of combining cultural identities (Roccas & Brewer, 2002) as identified in participants' narrations and elaborate on how these modes were embedded in narrations of relational contexts.

Cultural identity compatibility—The hyphenated and integrated modes

Participants shared stories that elucidated a perceived compatibility of cultural identities, meaning that they were able to combine several cultural identities simultaneously. They expressed that belonging to and growing up with more than one cultural group had made them more reflective and critical, "interculturally competent," and also "more sensitive to and aware of intercultural differences." Some participants offered stories conveying a *hyphenated mode*. This meant that participants perceived themselves to be right at the intersection of the dominant and heritage culture by combining unique characteristics of both cultures into one exclusive identity. For example, Fatma (female, 25) illustrated her two cultures as additive components: "Practically I'm fifty-fifty, Austrian-Turkish." Betül (female, 25) added, "I really feel half-half. Also, when I'm telling you that Turkish is my mother tongue or that I was born in Turkey, I feel equally at home here as in Turkey because I have built my life here." Other participants, like Esra (female, 26), explained consciously adopting individual characteristics of both cultures:

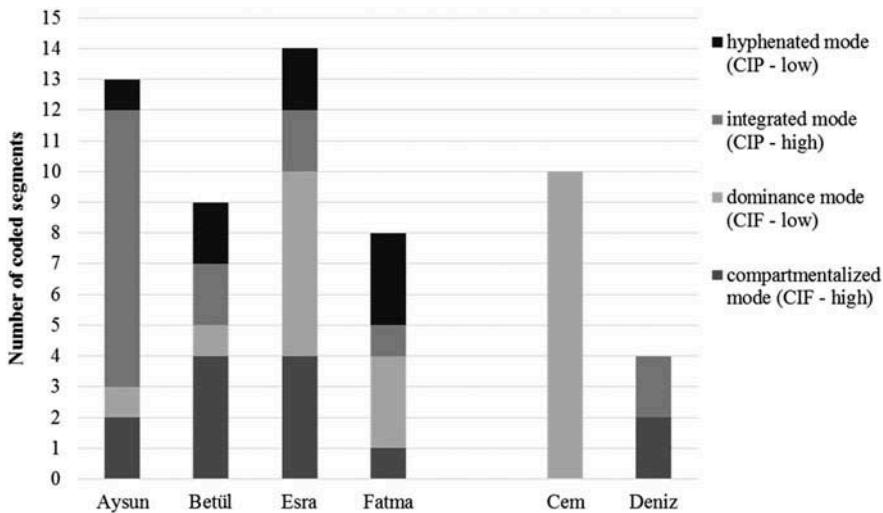


Figure 1. Total number of coded segments per participant for each mode of combining cultural identities, indicating cultural identity compatibility (CIP), cultural identity conflict (CIF), low social identity complexity (low), and high social identity complexity (high).

If you grow up in a country where you see different cultures, you see the negative things and those you just don't want to adopt. Just as German culture has some negative things, the Turkish does, too. That's what I'm trying to avoid.

Other participants shared stories of an *integrated mode*, another understanding of compatible cultural identities. Participants perceived that their cultural groups were highly overlapping and convergent. This was more complex than the hyphenated mode, because participants had a unique representation of cultural aspects but felt like they had fully merged different cultures into one complete hybrid (Roccas & Brewer, 2002). Deniz (male, 27) described himself as “mish-mash of both.” Aysun (female, 28) expanded on the common German idiom “sitting between the chairs,” which refers to being in an uncomfortable position between two or more possibilities:

Already as a child I had trouble understanding what people meant by saying “always being between two chairs.” I've always regarded [having both cultures] as a personal gain. It was never negative. . . . With me, this all became one entity, this third chair. I'm not between the chairs. I have a third chair and that encompasses everything. It's something new.

The integrated mode included three different nuances: The integration of dominant and heritage culture (integrated bicultural), the identification with cultures beyond national borders (supranational), and the identification beyond cultural definitions (acultural). Although some participants' descriptions were of the integrated bicultural nuance, five out of six participants explicitly refused the label “bicultural.” Instead, they preferred supranational terms, such as European, diverse, multilingual, intercultural, or “multikulti,” a German expression for multiculturalism in casual language (Bathen, Sporer, Deinert, & Heiss, 2009). Aysun (female, 28) explained that she was “rather multicultural because bicultural is somehow still too limited. It is as if there were only one or two things but that's not true.” Participants also provided a number of acultural descriptions when they were asked to characterize their cultural background. They described themselves with labels such as human, social democrat, woman, or “diversity and entity at the same time” because cultural groups and state borders were “socially constructed” or “outdated.” Aysun (female, 28) described her preference for acultural labels because of her discontent with the official, legal term “migrant background”: “Maybe I have trouble finding attributions in one word because I don't feel like it is

a background anymore. Because it has become part of me so much that I might even have an allergic reaction to the term “background.”

Cultural identity conflict—The cultural dominance and compartmentalized modes

Participants also shared stories that revealed an understanding of conflicting cultural identities if “the cultures differed quite a lot” or their cultural or ethnic group was living in a “parallel society.” This narrative was especially salient with the two participants with a strong heritage-culture orientation, who explained that they felt constantly alienated from or uncomfortable in the dominant culture and mainstream society.

Some participants expressed a *cultural dominance mode*, utilizing “us” or “my culture” to refer to the Turkish or Kurdish culture and “them” or “the other culture” to refer to the Austrian or German culture. As with the integrated mode, stories of the cultural dominance mode were low in complexity because participants perceived long-lasting dominance of only one cultural identity across relational contexts (Roccas & Brewer, 2002). Cem (male, 28) exclusively shared stories of the cultural dominance mode and stated that his feelings of cultural belonging had been embedded in and shaped by the historical conditions and transnational suppression of his ethnic group, the Kurdish-Alevi minority, in Austria as well as in Turkey. He further described a strong responsibility and belonging to the Kurdish group and explained, “The more shit that happens, the more Kurdish you are.” He also remembered that a long trip to a Kurdish city in Turkey was followed by a heightened sensitivity to cultural conflict and ethnic discrimination in Austria and withdrawing from the Austrian culture even more.

Participants also offered experiences of a *compartmentalized mode*, continuously switching between the dominant and heritage identity, depending on the relational context, in a complex manner. On the one hand, both German participants described domain-specific cultural orientations, meaning that the private, emotional part of their personality was “their Turkish side” and the public, academic part was “their German side.” Aysun (female, 28) added, “When I’m working or somehow reading books, researching, then I have acquired—quotation marks—typical German characteristics, which I think is very good.” On the other hand, three participants discussed that being perceived as a cultural or ethnic minority in Turkey as well as Austria or Germany had made them feel homeless, alienated, excluded, or disengaged from both cultures or like they could only be “either one or the other”: an expression of cultural compartmentalization. Talking about Turkish-heritage individuals in Europe, Deniz (male, 27) noted, “In Europe they are Turks, in Turkey they are Europeans” and that “thus somehow you have an identity problem, somehow you feel foreign everywhere.”

Relational contexts supporting cultural identity compatibility

A large part of participants’ narrations of cultural identity compatibility and conflict were tied to experiences in relational contexts throughout adolescence (RQ2). Their stories contained the following relational contexts: parents, spouses, peers, other heritage-culture members, dominant-culture members and peers, and multicultural, ethnically diverse peer groups. The following segments illustrate how and which relational contexts fostered participants’ perception of cultural identity compatibility, thus the hyphenated and integrated mode of combining cultural identities, and how these related to identifying with one or several cultures in adulthood.

Parents—Supporting integration as role models

Throughout adolescence, participants perceived benevolent parental attitudes toward the dominant culture as beneficial to exploring and belonging to multiple cultures. They elaborated that their parents facilitated the integration of the dominant and heritage cultures when they were “not as strict as others” and allowed them to take part in Christian events at school, such as Christmas or Easter. Both German participants described witnessing how their parents increasingly adapted to the

dominant German culture over time. Aysun (female, 28) remembered, “My mom came back from her vacation in Turkey and was shocked. She had become so German . . . and it strongly shaped me.” Fatma (female, 25) shared that her strong sense of heritage culture belonging probably derived from her parents’ constant efforts and cultural “implantation.” Nonetheless, Fatma also stated that her identification with both cultures as an adult also resulted from her parents’ intentions of permanent residency in Austria and their acculturation expectations:

I can’t say that I only have the Turkish culture, but I mean I am actually fifty-fifty, Austrian-Turkish. I think one reason for that is that my parents deliberately made it so. They were always of the opinion that we will live here, I mean, not like the classic Turkish families who said “We’ll earn some money and then we’ll go back.” But rather “We will live in Austria and you’ll live in Austria, too, and thus you’ll adapt.”

Heritage-culture peers and spouse—Social comparison, pride, and supranationalism

Esra (female, 26), despite identifying with only her heritage culture, shared that a successful Turkish-German friend and role model reminded her of the positive prospects for bicultural individuals and had fostered pride and a hyphenated understanding of cultures. Admiring her friends’ educational success, public recognition, and professional engagement despite frequent experiences of ethnic discrimination, Esra explained, “When I see these people then I’m really proud, I mean those who really fight.”

Esra also shared that her Turkish husband had helped her reconnect with her heritage culture: “Since I got married, I’ve been feeling more Turkish.” However, whenever her husband reminded her of her typically German character traits she remembered feeling “rather multicultural” compared to him. Being perceived as a typical member of the dominant culture by her husband despite her many experiences of ethnic discrimination and exclusion made her employ a supranational mode (i.e., a positive social identity overarching her heritage culture as well as German characteristics).

Dominant-culture members and peers—Supporting academic development, curiosity, and tolerance

Three participants reported that Austrian or German kindergarten and school teachers had been academic role models and promoted dominant-culture identification and school engagement. For three participants, positive long-lasting friendships and being part of a predominantly ethnic-Austrian or ethnic-German group of friends in and out of school had promoted dominant-culture belonging in addition to their heritage-culture identity. Fatma (female, 25) talked about her ethnic-Austrian best friend in adolescence who had always been very interested and supportive of the Turkish culture and traditions and joined Fatma’s family in their fasting one year: “My friend and her mom were definitely a boost for me,” facilitating a hyphenated mode.

Multicultural peer groups—Diversity as resource

Aysun (female, 28) experienced being part of a mixed-gender, mixed-ethnic group of friends in most years of secondary school. According to her, this had distinctly promoted an integrated, acultural understanding of her own cultural identity. She stated, “Everyone accepted, tolerated me as I am and I never felt like, now I’m wearing a headscarf or that I’m Turkish or a girl. I was just part of everything, because I was Aysun.” Also, Betül (female, 25) and Fatma (female, 25) described multicultural neighborhoods and groups of friends as resources for cultural exploration during adolescence. Fatma remembered gaining confidence and reflectiveness and becoming more critical about both the dominant and heritage cultures:

I think you think further, I mean, you are not restricted, you are more open towards other cultures, I mean, I also now have Serbian, Bosnian friends as well as Arabs, very broad. It’s really multicultural and thus you are more open towards other societies, towards other mindsets. I mean, if I’m saying “I don’t eat pork” then the other person says “I eat kosher.” Then you don’t immediately think “Well that guy is nuts” or something.

Relational contexts fostering cultural identity conflict

The following segments elaborate on how relational contexts fostered participants' perception of cultural identity conflict, thus the cultural dominance mode and compartmentalized mode, and how these related to their cultural identities in adulthood.

Dominant- and heritage-culture peers—Opposing lifestyles, dichotomy, and conflict

In their early teens, some participants remembered perceiving increasing differences in lifestyle and interests between themselves and their dominant-culture peers and classmates. Participants shared a compartmentalized mode when they remembered loyalty conflicts or a constant religious and cultural dichotomy between the heritage and dominant culture. For Fatma (female, 25), the confrontation with the drinking behaviors of Austrian classmates in adolescence made it consistently difficult to reflect on her own religious, Islamic values:

I think that is the only disadvantage of growing up with two cultures because sometimes you think: There is A in Islam and B in Christianity. Yes, I think B might actually make much more sense and might be much easier but no [laughs] let's do A. We have to do A. I mean it's always like that: Hm, this indeed makes sense, so why aren't we doing that, or something? I mean the dichotomy is actually there, I mean so sometimes you're really burdened. Just close your eyes and power through [laughs].

Two participants expressed feeling explicitly vulnerable to changes in their cultural environment in adolescence. Both Aysun (female, 28) and Betül (female, 25) changed from culturally diverse schools to academic track schools with few ethnic minority students. Like other participants, they remembered not identifying with any of their new classmates, their lifestyle, or their partying behavior. In this time of uncertainty, both participants recalled actively seeking out new heritage-culture friends who would share their interests and cultural belonging and shifting from an integrative understanding of culture to a cultural dominance mode. Aysun explained, "I was 11 or 12, probably maybe it had something to do with me starting to wear my headscarf and I must have thought to myself that Turkish friends might be more likely to take me into their group." But both Aysun and Betül described their quick realization that they did not fit in with the seclusion, "bad habits" (e.g., smoking or speaking slang), or "conservative topics" of these heritage-culture peers: "They only talked about family and finding a partner. That just wasn't me" (Betül). Both of them stated that after leaving these groups they "became multikulti again" and preferred an integrated, supranational understanding of identity.

Dominant-culture members and peers—Exclusion, discrimination, and separation

All participants recalled experiencing some sort of ethnic discrimination by dominant-group members. Four participants also stated that this had made them disengage from the dominant culture and retreat to a cultural dominance of their heritage identity. Especially the two participants who identified only with their heritage culture shared experiences of social exclusion, racial profiling at airports or in trains, being downgraded in school, or having teachers or headmasters discourage them from attending academic track schools. Esra (female, 26) elaborated:

I couldn't say that I'm German, because the Germans don't accept it either. I mean, I'll never be German to them, which is why for me it also wasn't, it was never a question for me if I'm German or not. ... Am I integrated, even though I'm wearing a headscarf? Those are always questions no one can answer. In that way I don't feel like a German in Germany.

Most participants stated that that they had been excellent, well-adjusted "model students" but that most of their heritage-culture friends continued on non-academic track secondary schools. Participants expressed that keeping in touch with heritage-culture peers outside of school and making new friends in the predominantly ethnic Austrian or German school setting eventually forced them into a compartmentalized mode. Esra (female, 26) stated that changing to a monoethnic German secondary school in early adolescence followed by troubling years and many instances of

humiliation and marginalization, she withdrew completely and spent most recreational time with her friends from Quran practice at the mosque. Other participants also expressed that the low representation of their ethnic group in school in contrast to the cultural diversity of participants' neighborhoods eventually resulted in even stronger bonds with their heritage-culture peers outside of school, in feeling disconnected from school, and feeling rejected by the dominant culture.

General discussion

Using problem-centered interviews, we explored how Turkish-heritage young adults' experiences in different relational contexts in Austria influenced the perceived compatibility and conflict of their cultural identities. Advancing the theoretical understanding of combining cultural identities, in the following section we unveil and interpret variation among participants' perceived cultural identity compatibility and conflict, depending on intraindividual and interindividual factors (RQ1) as well as relational factors (RQ2).

Looking into intraindividual differences, all but one participant in this study conveyed between two and four modes, similar to Roccas and Brewer (2002), to negotiate their cultural identities (RQ1): Stories of the hyphenated and the integrated mode were in line with previous research on perceived compatibility or integration of cultural identities (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005), whereas stories of the dominant and compartmentalized mode indicated perceived conflict of cultural identities (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Hong et al., 2000). Showing more than one consistent strategy of combining cultural identities, individuals were not easily identified into bicultural acculturation strategies (e.g., Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013) but rather reported high flexibility in applying and exploring different modes across relational contexts and time.

Supranational or acultural patterns only became apparent in stories of late adolescence or early adulthood. Importantly, modes of combining cultural identities varied most in times of stress or insecurity (Roccas & Brewer, 2002). In line with previous findings on ethnic and racial identity development (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014), participants explained that significant changes in relational contexts during adolescence, such as school changes, starting to wear a headscarf, or the shifting drinking behavior of dominant-culture peers, made them retreat into their heritage culture. This leads to the assumption that transitional phases and age might be crucial for cultural identity development and also for the perception of cultural identity compatibility and conflict.

In regard to interindividual variation, male participants conveyed fewer different modes of combining cultural identities than female participants. This coincides with previous findings on gender differences in autobiographical narratives, indicating that already in adolescence, racially and economically diverse females told more elaborated, coherent, reflective, and agentic narratives than did adolescent males (Fivush, Bohanek, Zaman, & Grapin, 2012). This supports the notion that Turkish-heritage men and women in Austria differ in the ways in which they negotiate belonging (Scheibelhofer, 2007).

Overall, participants preferred combining cultural identities into less complex, overarching representations, such as supranational labels, as opposed to more complex, distinct representations of their cultural identities (Roccas & Brewer, 2002). Mirroring findings of racial minorities in Germany, participants expressed their preference for the term "multikulti" as opposed to the badly connoted and ill-fitting legal term "migrant background" (Hubbard & Utsey, 2015). Moreover, the hyphenated mode (e.g., Austrian-Turkish) was the least mentioned in participants' stories, and all but one participant declared the term "bicultural" too limited for the multifacetedness of their lived, culturally diverse realities. In addition to personal experiences, it is possible that attending academic track schools with curricula that target citizenship and inclusion facilitated the familiarity and identification with labels beyond the dominant and heritage culture (Faas, 2009).

However, despite supranational self-labeling, most of the stories described conflicting cultural identities and the dominance of the heritage culture in particular. Similar to stories from racial minorities in Germany, statements such as "I couldn't say that I'm German, because the Germans

also don't accept it" indicated that exclusion experiences with dominant-culture members stood in the way of feeling like a valuable member of society and were a source of distress (Hubbard & Utsey, 2015). Perceiving high levels of ethnic discrimination led to fewer possibilities for positive interactions with the dominant culture (Shelton, Douglass, Garcia, Yip, & Trail, 2014), to less bicultural orientation (Vedder et al., 2007), and to a stronger heritage orientation and disidentification with the dominant culture (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Pasupathi, Wainryb, & Twali, 2012). As part of a highly stigmatized group, such as a Muslim woman wearing a headscarf, the strong sense of heritage-culture belonging was a cultural resilience factor potentially shielding the negative effects of exclusion and discrimination on well-being (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999; Rivas-Drake & Stein, 2017). This further supports the idea that the raised salience of the threatened heritage-culture group contributed essentially to low cultural identity complexity and to the perceived incompatibility of cultural identities (Hutchison, Lubna, Goncalves-Portelinha, Kamali, & Khan, 2015).

Constructing cultural identities based on relational experiences in adolescence

Turkish-heritage young adults in this study constructed their cultural identities based on the amount and personal significance of relational contexts supporting cultural identity compatibility or conflict in adolescence (RQ2). On the one hand, participants revealed that *within* each relational context they experienced either the support of only one cultural identity (i.e., fostering cultural identity conflict) or of multiple cultural identities (i.e., supporting cultural identity compatibility). On the other hand, participants perceived a general compatibility or conflict of cultural identities *across* relational contexts, which manifested over time in their identification with one or multiple cultures in early adulthood. These considerations are visualized in the model of cultural identity compatibility and conflict in relational contexts for Turkish-heritage young adults in Austria (Figure 2).

Relational contexts supportive of more than one cultural identity, such as multicultural peer groups, were connected to perceived compatibility of cultural identities. Treating diversity as a benefit and different cultural identities as equally important, these relational contexts offered a bigger variety of positive group identities for Turkish-heritage individuals to draw from. Importantly, a low ethnic group representation in school promoted participants' heritage culture exploration solely within multicultural relations outside of school (Bauer et al., 2013), which led to a stronger and more salient heritage identity in these relational contexts (Douglass, Mirpuri, & Yip, 2016; Juang & Nguyen, 2010). Thus, compatible cultural identities within multicultural environments and the possibility to belong helped buffer against feeling disconnected from either the dominant- or the heritage-culture group and thus may have lessened the negative effects of "cultural homelessness" (Navarrete & Jenkins, 2011).

In contrast, the dissonance in ethnic composition between monocultural academic track secondary schools and multicultural neighborhoods or peer groups was related to compartmentalization and perceived conflict of cultural identities. As expected, highly educated Turkish-heritage individuals experienced implicit expectations to deliver high levels of academic performance and to assimilate into the dominant culture. Yet success in the educational system was in stark contrast both to parental expectations to maintain the heritage culture and to the inclusive understanding of identity in friend groups. To navigate through this dichotomy, participants used compartmentalization and, similar to findings in Turkish-Dutch adults, switched between cultural identities between the public, academic and private, emotional life domain (Arends-Tóth & Van De Vijver, 2004). Findings suggest that in addition to multicultural education and an inclusive curriculum in secondary schools, Turkish minority individuals might benefit particularly from a culturally diverse student population in academic track schools (Thijs & Verkuyten, 2014). Increasing opportunities to express, explore, and combine several cultural identities in contexts beyond the neighborhood might further facilitate intercultural relations as well as the perceived compatibility of cultural identities.

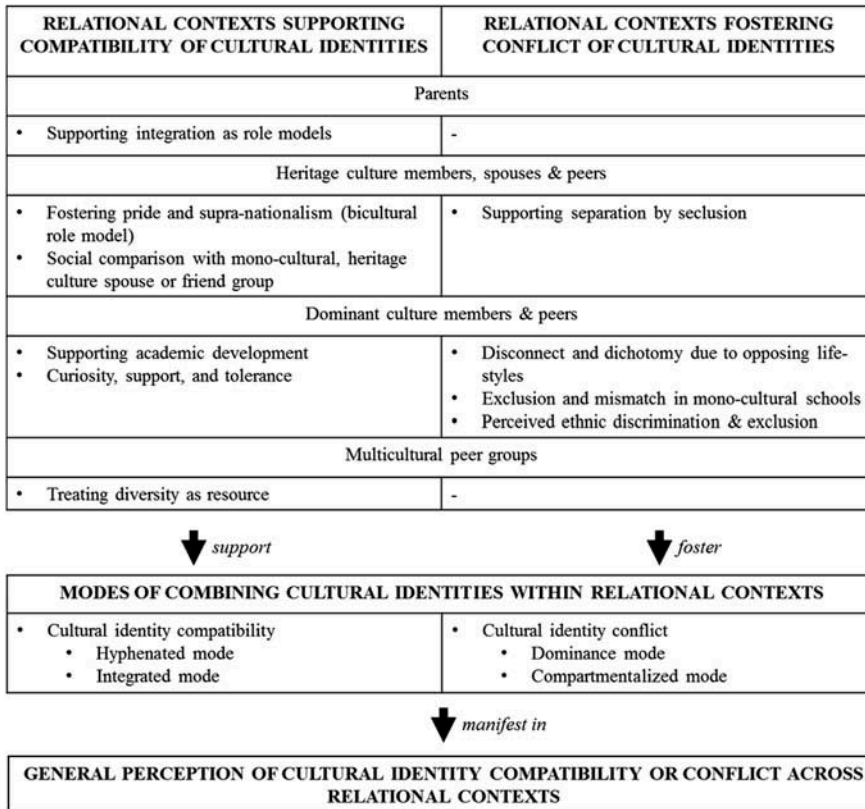


Figure 2. Model of cultural identity compatibility and conflict in relational contexts for Turkish-heritage young adults in Austria.

Limitations

As in previous qualitative studies on cultural identity, we acknowledge that all interviewees played an active role in reconstructing their cultural belonging (Scheibelhofer, 2007). Participants' narrations of past social experiences were always subject to constantly evolving meaning-making processes in the present (McLean & Pasupathi, 2010). Reported experiences and especially the perceived importance of experiences might differ, depending on participants' mood or other factors, such as age or amount of autobiographical understanding (Fivush et al., 2012). We recognize that findings are limited to potential interpretation bias, that this qualitative research can only give limited insight into the complex mindsets and memories of the narrators, and that findings can only be considered within their appropriate historical and cultural context (Levitt et al., 2017). Importantly, the current study highlighted experiences of Turkish-heritage members with high levels of education (i.e., completed secondary school or higher), a group thus far under-represented in empirical research. Therefore, we acknowledge that the sample size and context of results limit the generalization and transferability of findings to other multicultural populations or groups with lower formal education. Still, similarities to research in other minority populations in Europe suggest that this study can contribute to a greater insight into the complexity and context of cultural identity formation by highlighting the interconnectedness of developmental settings.

Future directions and implications

This study identified issues that deserve attention and exploration in future research. To meet participants' claim for supranational or acultural self-labeling and in order to move beyond a

bidimensional approach to acculturation, we support the notion of open-ended self-description when studying cultural identities (e.g., Van De Vijver et al., 2015). More complex, pluralistic approaches such the social identity complexity perspective (Roccas & Brewer, 2002) can possibly provide insights closer to the lived experiences and intercultural influences of multicultural individuals. Facilitated by the increasingly globalized and digitalized world, there is a strong need to identify and investigate a greater variety of opportunities and contexts for minority members to explore cultural identities beyond the heritage or dominant culture (Ferguson & Bornstein, 2012).

Participants in the current study revealed that cultural identity experiences reached *across* settings. This emphasizes the relevance of multiple supporting, accepting, and nondiscriminatory socialization settings to simultaneously allow individuals to identify with a variety of cultures and attain high levels of adjustment (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013). Also, this emphasizes the need to investigate how the mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006)—meaning the linkage and processes of relational contexts *across* principal settings, such as family and school—can promote cultural identities and positive intercultural relations.

Especially with the enormous increase in immigrant and refugee populations in many European countries over the past years, we must pay attention to the historical context and time (i.e., the chronosystem) to understand individual cultural identity development in multicultural environments (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). In this study, one participant's cultural belonging was embedded in and shaped by his multiminority status and the transnational and structural suppression of his ethnic group (Kurdish). This might be especially relevant when studying cultural identity development and adjustment of recently migrated individuals in Europe. This study has shown once again that qualitative and person-centered approaches can add valuable insights into personal identity experiences of ethnic minority members while accounting for context and time (e.g., Douglass et al., 2016; Syed & Azmitia, 2010).

When investigating the Turkish minority population in Europe, the popular and research discourse needs to move beyond focusing on negative school performance or lack of adjustment (Scheibelhofer, 2007). Complex social identity structures and perceived compatibility of cultural identities can help buffer the negative effects of ethnic discrimination. They can furthermore increase tolerance toward other social groups (Roccas & Brewer, 2002). Thus, focusing on the positive impact of multicultural environments for combining cultural identities can pave the way for improving intercultural contact not only at the individual level but also at the societal level.

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