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ARTICLE



Can children develop a dual identity when immigrant mothers feel homesick? A short-term longitudinal study among Turkish immigrants

Olivia Spiegler^{a,b} , Jochem Thijs^c, Maykel Verkuyten^c and Birgit Leyendecker^b

^aDepartment of Psychological Methods and Evaluation, Hagen University, Hagen, Germany;

^bDepartment of Developmental Psychology, Ruhr University Bochum, Bochum, Germany;

^cDepartment of Interdisciplinary Social Science, Utrecht University, Utrecht, The Netherlands

ABSTRACT

Turkish immigrant-origin youth in Western Europe often develop strong ethnic and weaker national identities. To advance our understanding of this pattern, we investigated the concurrent development and intergenerational transmission of both identities over time in conjunction with maternal homesickness. Our study was based on a sample of 176 Turkish mother-child dyads from Germany, Norway, and the Netherlands. Mothers ($M_{t1} = 38$ years) reported on their identities and homesickness at T1 and children ($M_{t1} = 12$ years) on their identities at T1 and T2. Our results showed that children's ethnic and national identities became more incompatible over time, mother's homesickness strengthened children's ethnic identities, and mother's ethnic identities in combination with high levels of homesickness weakened children's national identities. We conclude that early adolescence is a critical time for Turkish immigrant youth's identity development and that a focus on parental acculturative stressors can advance ethnic socialization and cultural transmission research.

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KEYWORDS Dual identity; immigrant youth; acculturative stress; homesickness; intergenerational transmission; ethnic identity; national identity

Among immigrant-origin youth the development of an ethnic identity together with a sense of belonging to the society they grow up in (i.e. dual identity) bears multiple benefits for adjustment (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013). Most immigrants prefer a dual identity but Turkish immigrant-origin youth in Western Europe often report strong ethnic identities that go together with a relatively weak national identity, indicating struggles to combine both identities (Dimitrova, Aydinli, Chasiotis, Bender, & van de Vijver, 2015; Phinney, Berry, Vedder, & Liebkind, 2006). So far, little is known about the emergence of these

CONTACT Olivia Spiegler  olivia.spiegler@rub.de

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rather conflicting identities among Turkish youth and the role of the family context.

Previous research shows that childhood socialization plays a key role in passing on the ethnic culture (Kwak, 2003). Among Turkish immigrant parents, there is a strong orientation toward heritage cultural maintenance and the own ethnic identity (Verkuyten, Thijs, & Stevens, 2012). This orientation is an important resource for Turkish immigrant youth (e.g. Dimitrova et al., 2015) but may become a barrier to the development of their national identity. Therefore, we considered circumstances under which strong parental ethnic identities might impair children's psychological integration into the host society. More specifically, we examined the role of parental homesickness as a form of acculturative stress (Müller & Koch, 2011).

Our hypotheses were based upon the intergenerational transmission literature and the (minority) family stress model (Conger & Donnellan, 2007; Emmen et al., 2013). We chose to focus on families with early adolescent children as this age marks a developmental period where a sense of belonging to cultural groups more fully starts to develop (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014) and where parents strongly affect their children's cultural identities (Verkuyten et al., 2012). We adopted an acculturation perspective that centers on children's sense of belonging and the theoretical independence of ethnic and national identities (e.g. Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001). In addition, our focus was on Turkish mothers as women are typically considered the primary cultural socialization agents (Phinney et al., 2001) and because Turkish women experience more acculturative stress than men (Müller & Koch, 2017).

Dual identity

Many immigrants identify with both their ethnic group as well as with the receiving society (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013). Yet Turkish immigrant-origin youth in West European countries often struggle with the development of such a dual identity. For instance, Turkish adolescents in Germany, the Netherlands and Norway tend to have high ethnic identification but show relatively little commitment to the host societies (Ersanilli & Saharso, 2011; Vedder, Sam, & Liebkind, 2007). Cross-sectional research further finds a negative relation between both group identities among Turkish immigrants in different Western European countries (Dimitrova et al., 2015; Phinney et al., 2006; Verkuyten et al., 2012). While these correlational findings are important, they do not tell us if ethnic identity has detrimental effects on national identity, if a strong sense of national belonging disconnects youth from their culture of origin, or if there are bidirectional effects. Findings among Turkish immigrants suggest that over time it is more likely that stronger ethnic identities lead to a weaker sense of national belonging, rather than the other way around (Fleischmann & Verkuyten, 2016; Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2012).

Intergenerational transmission

Immigrant parents for whom their ethnicity is important transmit messages about ethnic belonging and pride to their children, practice their ethnic culture, and are likely to have strong feelings about the ethnic knowledge and beliefs they want their children to develop (Hughes et al., 2006). These ethnic enculturation processes typically result in stronger ethnic identities among children (van Bergen, Ersanilli, Pels, & De Ruyter, 2016).

The role of immigrant parents in the transmission of host national identities is less obvious. Within Turkish immigrant families, traditional collectivist values but not Western individualistic values have been found to be effectively transmitted from parents to children (Phalet & Schönplflug, 2001). In addition, large-scale research among Turkish and other immigrant-origin groups in the Netherlands showed that family life is much more important for the continuation of ethnic culture than for mainstream socio-cultural adaptation (Huijnk, Verkuyten, & Coenders, 2012). These findings suggest that the intergenerational transmission of national identities might be weaker than the transmission of ethnic identities. Yet, this does not mean that immigrant parents cannot have a hampering or stimulating influence on their children's national orientation. On the one hand, heritage culture transmission might be complicated by competing cultural messages from the mainstream society and effective transmission of the ethnic culture may require a weak orientation towards the host society. This could mean that stronger parental ethnic identities lead to weaker national identities among children (van Bergen et al., 2016; Verkuyten et al., 2012). On the other hand, parents' orientation towards mainstream society can stimulate the development of a sense of national belonging among children (Birman, 2006; Sabatier, 2008).

Intergenerational transmission and homesickness

Homesickness is characterized by a preoccupation with family members and life in the country of origin, grieving for lost home and relationships, and frequent talks about home; it further involves negative attitudes toward the new environment, difficulties to adapt, and little interest in interactions with new people (Van Tilburg, Vingerhoets, & Van Heck, 1996). Turkish immigrants frequently report to be moderately homesick even in the second generation (Müller & Koch, 2011; Spiegler, Leyendecker, & Kohl, 2015) which may be fortified by strong ethnic networks and transnational ties with Turkey, and discrimination experiences (Tartakovsky, 2007; Watt & Badger, 2009). Within individuals, homesickness has been linked to stronger ethnic and weaker national identities (Spiegler et al., 2015; Vinokurov, Trickett, & Birman, 2002).

The literature on the role of parental homesickness for the intergenerational transmission of identities is far from clear. The family stress model suggests that

economic strains increase parental stress, which in turn leads to less optimal parenting behavior (Conger & Donnellan, 2007). An extension of the model shows that acculturative stress also leads to less optimal parenting (Emmen et al., 2013) which in turn reduces the chance of successful intergenerational transmission (Costigan & Dokis, 2006; Kim, Chen, Wang, Shen, & Orozco-Lapray, 2013). Therefore, homesickness may impair cultural transmission from mothers to children. However, other studies showed that acculturative stress can also trigger engagement in parenting and investment in family relationships (Lorenzo-Blanco et al., 2016; White, Roosa, Weaver, Nair, & McBride Murry, 2009) which makes cultural transmission more effective. Homesickness in particular has been linked to higher levels of empathy, sensitivity, and care for others (Carden & Feicht, 1991), factors that facilitate the transmission of values (Knafo & Schwartz, 2001; Rudy & Grusec, 2001), ethnic identities (Costigan & Dokis, 2006), and attitudes toward the host culture (Kim et al., 2013). Therefore, homesickness could also be a form of acculturative stress that stimulates cultural transmission.

Research questions and hypotheses

Our first research question addressed the concurrent development of Turkish youth's ethnic and national identities over time. We expected that both identities were negatively associated and that strong ethnic identities at T1 were linked to weaker national identities at T2. Our second research question focused on intergenerational transmission and the potential negative effect of mother's ethnic identities for children's national identities. We anticipated that Turkish immigrant mother's ethnic and national identities at T1 were positively associated with the respective child identities at T2 and that mother's ethnic identities at T1 were negatively associated with children's national identities at T2. Thirdly, we explored if the associations between mother identities at T1 and child identities at T2 depend on the level of maternal homesickness.

Method

Sample

The sample included 176 Turkish immigrant mother-child dyads from Germany ($n = 71$), The Netherlands ($n = 54$), and Norway ($n = 51$) for whom T2 data were available. Of the mothers ($M_{\text{age}} = 38.04$ years, $SD = 4.78$), 81% were born in Turkey and have lived in the host countries for 25 years ($SD = 9$). Most mothers (40.9%) had no education or primary education, 28.1% had lower secondary education and a third (31%) had at least upper secondary education (e.g. 10 years of schooling or more). Children ($M = 12.40$ years, $SD = 0.77$, range = 11–15, 54% girls) attended seventh grade at T1 and eighth grade at T2. Most were born in the host countries (90.4%), only 6.3% were born in Turkey and for 3.4% there was no information available.

Our analyses were based on open data that were collected by the SIMCUR team (Leyendecker, Mesman, & Oppedal, 2016). Sampling took place in an industrial and ethnically diverse area in the Northwest of Germany. Participants were recruited via registry data, schools, and public campaigns and visited at home by trained research assistants. Confidentiality was explained, and all participants (including children) signed consent forms. Families received €25 compensation. The respective national ethics committees approved the study.

Measures

Child identities

Children's identities were measured at T1 and T2 which were approximately ten months apart. Ethnic identity was measured with three items from the commitment subscale of the 'Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure—Revised' (Phinney & Ong, 2007). For theoretical reasons we focused on the commitment subscale and not the exploration subscale. Furthermore, in the European context the former subscale has been found to reach full measurement equivalence across countries whereas the latter subscale does not (Musso, Moscardino, & Inguglia, 2017). National identity was assessed with two items adapted from the ICSEY project (Berry et al., 1993). The items were 'I think of myself as part of the host national group' and 'I feel that I am part of the host national culture.' In each case a five-point Likert-type scale was used ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 5 (*totally agree*). Cronbach's alpha was 0.73 and 0.82 for children's ethnic and national identity at T1, and 0.85 and 0.79 at T2.

Mothers' identities and homesickness

To assess the ethnic and national identity of mothers, we used the same five items as with the children. The homesickness scale consisted of three items developed by Oppedal (2006): 'I miss friends and family living in Turkey', 'I am worried about family members in Turkey', and 'I am frustrated about not understanding host ways of thinking and behaving'. Response options ranged from 0 = 'did not happen, not a burden' to 4 = 'happened, very much a burden'. The internal consistencies were acceptable to good with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.67 for homesickness, and alphas of 0.72 and 0.80 for ethnic and national identity, respectively.

Missing data

There were missing values on the T1 items for mother's ethnic identity (maximal 7.4% missing), national identity (maximal 5.7%), and homesickness (maximal 4.5%), and children's ethnic identity (maximal 8.5%) and national identity (maximal 7.4%). The pattern of missing values was completely at random (Little's MCAR test: $\chi^2(455) = 471.637, p = 0.285$). For our main analyses, we used multiple

Table 1. Intercorrelations and means.

	<i>M</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Mother ethnic identity T1	4.12						
2. Mother national identity T1	2.55	−0.21*					
3. Mother homesickness T1	1.41	0.13	−0.21**				
4. Child ethnic identity T1	3.84	0.17*	−0.12	−0.02			
5. Child national identity T1	2.79	−0.20**	0.40**	−0.12	−0.08		
6. Child ethnic identity T2	3.98	0.24**	−0.06	0.17*	0.45**	−0.14†	
7. Child national identity T2	2.62	−0.18*	0.43**	−0.12	−0.20*	0.57**	−0.29**

Note: All 2-sided. T1 = Time 1, T2 = Time 2.

† $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

imputations in SPSS to estimate missing values at the item level. We ran 20 imputations in which we included country, children's gender, and mothers' highest education and generational status as predictors (dummy variables), and all continuous measures (see below) as both dependents and predictors.

Data analytic strategy

We conducted multiple regression analyses across the 20 imputed data sets, and we report the pooled results. As the pooled regression results do not include effect sizes or standardized coefficients, we facilitated their interpretation by standardizing all continuous measures (z-scores) separately in each imputed data-set. This means that the regression coefficients can be interpreted as standardized betas. In the analyses, we controlled for children's gender, and mothers' generational status and education. Additionally, we controlled for country differences by including two dummy variables that compared the Netherlands and Germany against Norway and we specified dummies for missing scores on mothers' generational status and education.

Results

Table 1 contains the pooled correlations and means for the main variables and for mothers and children. Among the children, ethnic and national identities were uncorrelated at T1 but negatively related at T2.

To examine our first research question about the longitudinal relations between children's ethnic and national identities we regressed child ethnic and national identities at T2 on child ethnic and national identities at T1, while controlling for the effects of age (mother and child), child gender, mother generational status and education, and country. Preliminary inspection of normal probability plots and histograms of the standardized residuals revealed a deviation from normality for children's ethnic identity at T2. Therefore, we log-transformed this variable and standardized it again. The results are shown in Table 2 (Model 1). Children's ethnic identity at T1 predicted their ethnic identity at T2, and their national identity at T1 predicted their national identity at T2. In line

Table 2. Results of multiple regression analyses with standardized variables.

	Child ethnic identification T2			Child national identification T2			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Child ethnic identity T1	0.45 (0.08)**	0.43 (0.08)**	0.44 (0.08)**	−0.12 (0.07) [†]	−0.12 (0.07) [†]	−0.12 (0.07) [†]	−0.11 (0.07)
Child national identity T1	−0.11 (0.09)	−0.10 (0.09)	−0.08 (0.09)	0.43 (0.07)**	0.39 (0.07)**	0.39 (0.07)**	0.38 (0.08)**
Mother ethnic identity T1		0.15 (0.08) [†]	0.13 (0.08)		−0.03 (0.07)	−0.02 (0.07)	−0.04 (0.07)
Mother national identity T1		0.10 (0.10)	0.14 (0.10)		0.16 (0.08) [†]	0.15 (0.08) [†]	0.16 (0.08) [†]
Mother homesickness T1			0.20 (0.08)**			−0.06 (0.07)	−0.04 (0.07)
* Mother ethnic identity T1							−0.16 (0.07)*
* Mother national identity T1							0.03 (0.07)

Note: Effects of the control variables are not shown in the Table.
All 2-sided. T1 = Time 1, T2 = Time 2.
[†] $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

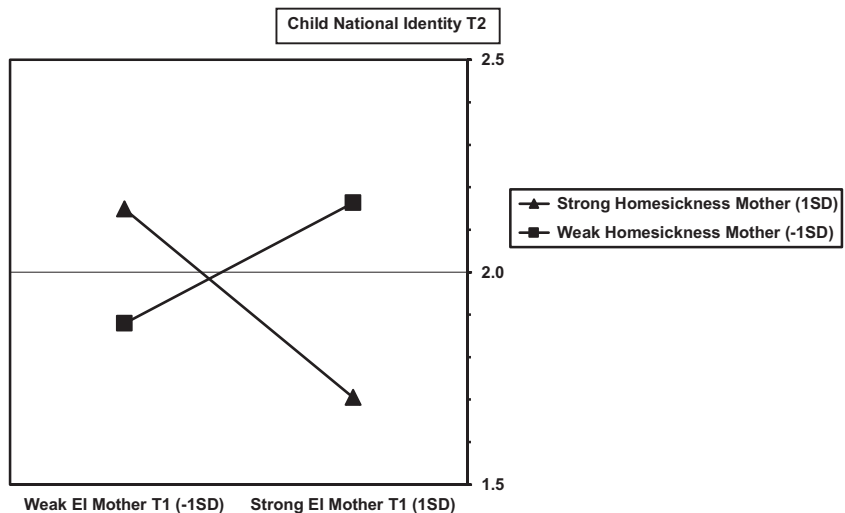


Figure 1. Effects of mothers' ethnic identity (EI) at T1 on children's national identity at T2 depending on mothers' homesickness at T1.

with our expectations, we also found a marginal, negative effect of ethnic identity at T1 on national identity at T2. This effect was significant with one-sided testing ($p < 0.05$) and might be responsible for the negative association between ethnic and national identity at T2.

To examine our second research question about the effects of mothers' identities on their children, we added mothers' ethnic and national identities at T1 as predictors (Model 2). When controlling for demographic variables and children's identities at T1, mothers' ethnic identity had a positive longitudinal effect on the ethnic identity of children (significant with one-sided testing), and mothers' national identity had a positive longitudinal effect on their children's national identity. This pattern of findings is in line with our assumptions about the intergenerational transmission of ethnic and national identities. We also anticipated that mothers' ethnic identity is negatively related to children's national identity. Our correlational data (Table 1) supported this hypothesis but our main analysis showed that mothers' ethnic identity at T1 had no main effect on children's national identity at T2.

To investigate our third research question, we added homesickness (Model 3) and the interactive effects of mothers' cultural identities and homesickness as predictors (Model 4). Interaction terms were calculated by multiplying the respective standardized variables. There was a positive longitudinal effect of mother's homesickness at T1 on children's ethnic identity at T2 even if we controlled for demographic variables and identities at T1 (mother and child). Once mothers' homesickness was entered into the model (Model 3), the expected effect of mothers' ethnic identity on children's ethnic identity at T2 was reduced.

For children's ethnic identity, the interactions of mothers' homesickness with their ethnic and national identities were not significant, which is why the fourth regression model is not shown in Table 2.

For children's national identity, we found no main effect of mothers' homesickness but a significant interaction between homesickness and mothers' ethnic identity. To examine the nature of this interaction we conducted simple slope analyses. Specifically, we calculated the effect of ethnic identity among mothers who experienced high ($1SD > M$) vs. low ($1SD < M$) levels of homesickness. For high levels of homesickness, mothers' ethnic identity at T1 had a negative effect on children's national identity at T2 ($b = -0.20$, $SE = 0.10$, $p = 0.05$). This effect was not significant for mothers who experienced little homesickness ($b = 0.13$, $SE = 0.09$, $p = 0.15$). Results are shown in Figure 1.

Discussion

Our results showed that ethnic and national identities among Turkish immigrant-origin youth become more incompatible in early adolescence and that strong initial ethnic identities might lead to a weaker sense of host national belonging. Mothers' homesickness predicted children's ethnic identities approximately one year later even after controlling for children's and mother's ethnic identities and demographics. Weaker national identities among mothers were longitudinally related to weaker national identities among children. Lastly, mothers' ethnic identities appeared to have an unfavorable longitudinal effect on children's national identities but only if mothers had relatively strong feelings of homesickness.

Immigrant-origin youth need to negotiate and integrate their multiple group belongings (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013), but Turkish immigrants in Western Europe appear to struggle with this developmental task (Phinney et al., 2006; Verkuyten et al., 2012). Our results extend previous research by narrowing a developmental period in which Turkish immigrant youth start to try to internalize their dual group belongings. The emergence of a negative link during early adolescence is meaningful because developmental theory and research argues that adolescence is a crucial time for the development of identities (Phinney, 1989). During adolescence, changes in the social environment and cognitive maturation stimulate ethnic identity search and development (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014) which may lead to the emergence of more conflicting ethnic and national identities. Furthermore, it is between the ages of 10 and 14 years that adolescents more fully begin to understand the implications of ethnic group membership for everyday life and develop a clearer awareness of negative stereotypes and discrimination (Quintana, 1998). Future studies might want to elaborate more on the role of both cognitive skills, and discrimination for dual identity development in adolescence.

Our results further indicate that immigrant mothers transmit both ethnic and national identities to their children although these effects are smaller once we controlled for children's identities at an earlier age. The transmission of national identities from mothers to children is in line with cross-sectional findings among ethnic minority families in France (Sabatier, 2008), refugee families from the former Soviet Union in America (Birman, 2006), and Moroccan-Dutch families in the Netherlands (Verkuyten et al., 2012). Traditionally, fathers are expected to act as brokers to the host society whereas mothers are expected to be the carriers of the heritage culture (Phinney et al., 2001). Our results cannot shed lights on these assumptions as we were not able to consider the role of fathers. Thus, we cannot rule out the possibility that the mother effects reflect more general socialization goals of both parents.

Mothers' homesickness longitudinally predicted children's commitment to their ethnic culture indicating that a preoccupation with family members and life in Turkey, frequent talks about home and difficulties to adjust stimulate children's ethnic identity development. In part, this finding adds a new angle to research on the family stress model which posits that acculturative stress impairs the quality of parenting (Conger & Donnellan, 2007; Emmen et al., 2013) which in turn reduces successful intergenerational transmission (Costigan & Dokis, 2006; Kim et al., 2013). Instead, our findings support the idea that acculturative stress promotes parental engagement (Lorenzo-Blanco et al., 2016; White et al., 2009) thereby fostering intergenerational transmission. Homesickness seems to be a specific type of acculturative stress that stimulates children's interest in the ethnic heritage culture.

Finally, stronger maternal ethnic identity was linked to weaker child national identity but only if mothers reported high levels of homesickness. Previous research showed that strong ethnic identities among parents make it harder for children to develop a sense of belonging to the host national group (Verkuyten et al., 2012). Our findings specify that strong ethnic identities among parents do not necessarily imply weaker child national identities. Once immigrant mothers have 'emotionally settled' in the host culture, their strong ethnic identities do not seem to have unfavorable effects on children's national identity development.

Limitations

First, we were unable to conduct meaningful cross-country comparisons due to the sample size and the unbalanced distribution of first and second-generation mothers across countries. Therefore, we could not clarify the impact of the national contexts on dual identity development and intergenerational transmission. However, the three West European countries examined are quite similar in many respects. Second, the finding of gradually developing incompatible cultural identities may be specific to Turkish immigrant youth although there are other immigrant-origin groups (e.g. Moroccans) that are also confronted with

unfavorable images of their ethnic group. Third, our study captures a relatively short developmental period. Ethnic identity development models suggest that in late adolescence a more confident and secure ethnic identity develops that might form the basis for greater openness to ethnic others and the host society in general (Phinney, Jacoby, & Silva, 2007). Fourth, our results might be stronger in families that migrated more recently because homesickness decreases with length of residence in the host country (Van Heck et al., 2005). However, it is possible that homesickness after migration is psychologically adaptive whereas only continued parental homesickness has negative effects on child integration. Finally, future research needs to examine if other forms of parental acculturative stress (e.g. discrimination) yield similar effects.

Conclusion

Early adolescence is a developmental period during which Turkish immigrant-origin children in Europe start to experience difficulties in combining their ethnic and national belongings. Our findings highlight that this development is intertwined with parental acculturation processes and that a critical situation might emerge when Turkish mothers identify strongly with their heritage culture and do not feel at home in the host country. Therefore, to understand the acculturation and integration process of youth, more research is needed on the commonness and causes of homesickness among immigrant parents.

Disclosure statement

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ORCID

Olivia Spiegler  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2862-8823>

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