

## THEMATIC ARTICLES

### EXPERIENCES OF IMMIGRATION

#### **‘It’s not enough to migrate. You have to deserve to be an immigrant!’: Narratives as weapons of struggling for the true/best immigrant group identity**

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**Abstract:** Based on the case of Bulgarian-Turkish immigrants who live in Turkey, the aim of this study is to contribute to the understanding of the meaning and the functions of the narratives in the special contextual conditions of the migration experience. This contextual and functional approach shows us that narratives in the present life of Turkish immigrants who migrated Turkey from Bulgaria, have a quite vital function as a form of expression and an experiencing realm of sub-immigrant group identities which do not have any forms of expression or concrete borders observable from the outside and which emerge only in narrative domain in parallel to contextual conditions. In this study, it has been examined how the immigrants construct and represent their sub-immigrant group identities in parallel to the situational context in the narrative events they come together, considering the contextual conditions of the immigration process which uncovers the meaning and the functions of narratives today.

**Keywords:** *immigration narratives, immigration experience, immigrant group identity, contextual analysis, Turkish migrations from Bulgaria to Turkey.*

#### **Introduction**

Immigration as an experience, because of the many general impacts and characteristics it has, is an extraordinary event which people need to recount. While the narration of this experience is a natural need and a common behavior caused by immigration, it is not possible to say that the immigration experience is narrated by all immigrants or even that it is narrated in the same way and with the same frequency because even if people go through the same immigration experience, they experience this event in the framework of their respective unique personalities and subjectivities.

Initially, immigrants narrate immigration experiences including the pre-migration and during-migration and the narrative expression is of reflexive nature rather than strategic at this point. However, within the course of time, each stimulus in the new environment compels them to make sense of their past and migration experience once again in line with their new needs. The fact that people attribute different meanings to their experiences separates them into two groups as those who have experienced immigration and those who have given special meanings to this experience and made it its identity. Transforming into strategic instruments after this stage, narratives become folklore as a special form of communication based on identity expression. For people who identify themselves with an immigrant identity, there are two “other” identities and groups: the first of these two groups is the group of people who attribute an ordinary meaning to their immigration experience and are adapted entirely to the environment immigrated to and the second group is the native population living in the environment immigrated to. It is quite easy to observe from outside the forms of otherisation concerning these two groups. However, as is the case with immigrants of Bulgaria, it is quite difficult to observe externally the ways of otherisation and the “the most... immigrant” categorization that immigrants practice within their own group as well or even realize the existence of such a problem because these borders are mental rather than material and they only appear verbally within the group. As a member of this migrant group, I can say that understanding the ways of intra-group identification of migrants of Bulgaria is of quite importance in order to understand and explain their critical discourse concerning the native population live in Turkey, who they regard as “the biggest and most dangerous other” despite having the same ethnic and religious identity as them.

### **Traumatic quality of immigration experience and therapeutic functions of narrating**

Migration, regardless of its nature (forced or discretionary), is not acts or events that mean people’s going to a different place individually or collectively than where they live as a simple movement of displacement. Migration is a complex, traumatic process, in which people, individually and collectively, also “cross intellectual, emotional and behavioral borders” (Espin, 1999: 19) in the process of crossing spatial borders. Therefore, the event or experience of migration is a long and

painful process which includes the whole life of an individual and also directs the process after it in terms of the impacts it creates and the results it brings about.

The most important reason why migration has a traumatic effect on those who migrate is that it damages their sense of the self and that it leads them to depression concerning their selfhood and perception of identity (Teber, 1993). That migrating people share these experiences and feelings with one another is of utmost importance. Thus, seeing that they are not alone and many people have been affected by the experience at issue in a similar or the same way, migrants begin to perceive the situation they are in as normal. This sameness and similarity provides a collective motivation concerning the fact that most problems that arise in the new life of migrants and that they find difficult to overcome can be solved. It can be said that such a motivation was extremely influential on part of the Turkish migrants of Bulgaria of 1989 in their decision to stay despite many problems and difficulties they encountered in the face of the fact that some other migrants had a tendency to return.

As we also stated before, perhaps the most significant therapeutic function of migration narratives is that they provide migrants with awareness about the traumatic situation they experience after migration. In this context, immigrants do not only confront their experiences when recounting them but they also transform the meaning of a given experience that creates a negative effect and restructure it in the framework of a meaning that creates a positive effect.

Migrants naturally narrate the problems they experience in environments where there are other migrants who experience the same problem as they do and consider this to be a serious one because they know that what they narrate will not be regarded as ordinary, nonsense, unnecessary or trivial. Above all, migrants experience a deep relief in the face of the presence of people who listen to them and, more importantly, understand them in the way they want to express themselves. This situation enables them to regain their individuality and selfhood, which they deny, trivialize and feel to have fragmented, and regard them as valuable.

As a result, although migration narratives creates different impacts on migrating people's psychologies, these acts and events of narration have an extremely positive and therapeutic effect and function on the way migrants perceive themselves and the world. In De Tona's words (2004: 318) 'diaspora is an earthquake that opens ontological cracks in human lives; narratives are the social cement to fill these cracks'.

## **Narratives as a form of recollection and reconstruction of the past**

Recollecting the past is a result and function produced by migration narratives and the act of narrating. In the post-migration process, the past for migrants is a way of maintaining their lives and the characteristics they have in the same way before learning the new and different and developing an attitude in the face of that. In other words, the past is not a time frame that is remembered but a life style which is still lived in and maintained without change despite the fact that the place lived in has changed. This process is also a process in which differences apart from the difference of space is not completely perceived yet and therefore, a disunity or dissociation concerning the 'past' and 'present' is not experienced in the continuity of time, space and life. However, migrants come to recognize very soon that the only thing they had to change was not a space and that the migration had brought about a change that involved almost the whole of their lives. In addition to this, migrants realize what they have exactly done with migration, what they have given up and what they have ventured with migration. With the traumatic effects of migration being started to be experienced, migrants begin to perceive time and life not as a continuity that involves the past, the present and the future but as two separate entities as 'the past' and 'the present' with definitely drawn boundaries.

For those who migrate, the past is a meaningful entirety which is known and in which one feels secure. However, the present is a new world which is full of mysteries and is different, strange, terrifying, inspiring a sense of insecurity. In this context, the past does not only mean a familiar space, social environment or a socio-cultural structure. The past stands for the way all these are perceived, the attitudes and manners developed in the face of these and therefore, a certain identity. Hence, for migrants, the past is an entirety that describes the self and identity, attributes a value to it, positions it and provides it with an existence within the framework of certain expressions and behaviors.

Through narratives, migrants do not only remember their past but they also attribute new meanings to and reconstruct the past and their memories formed by this mentioned past in line with new needs. That the past is remembered contextually and strategically and that it can be reconstructed (Halbwachs, 1992; Assmann, 2001; Nora, 2006) is quite functional for migrants to preserve and maintain especially those differences of theirs that they sense to be positive and meaningful in the new and different environment migrated to. This

situation enables migrants to make a choice concerning who they want to be and support this choice of theirs with a past they can construct in the way they need.

**Decide who to become and put on your narratives! Towards the narratives of immigrant identity**

People's perceptions concerning their selfhood and identity consist of the experiences they go through and certain perspectives, judgments, attitudes and manners they develop as a result of these experiences. The perception of selfhood and identity is continuously updated and undergoes a change in a natural way in the framework of new experiences they gain in the course of their lives (De Fina, 2003; Ochs & Capps, 1996). However, such sudden, comprehensive and unnatural changes as migration which occur in the framework of reality create a confusion, suspicion, instability, disunity and insecurity in people's perceptions of selfhood and identity.

Migration requires a redefinition of individual and social identities (De Fina, 2003); however, it does not bring about an imposition that means a complete change. People may make choices concerning who they will become in intellectual, emotional and behavioral terms. After migration, what determines migrants' perceptions of selfhood and identity is not directly or only the conditions that form their lives but their way of interpreting these conditions. For example, having migrated is apparently a reality that determines their lives. However, having migrated is not a reality that affects the perceptions of selfhood and identity of each and every individual migrant in the same way after migration.

For those migrants who establish peer to peer and face to face communication with their daily lives, there may be many ways and environments of interaction that ensure the collective identity and culture be lived and kept alive. However, especially through narratives, migrants also have the opportunity to establish a relationship and meet with those other migrants they do not share anything in their daily lives. The impact of ceremonies and rituals is limited to those people attending these environments. However, narratives are texts which continue to be conveyed also after the termination of the performance of narrating and therefore, that go beyond temporal, spatial and personal borders. Due to this characteristic of theirs, narratives establish connections between migrants living at quite remote places from each other and unify them as the members of the same identity.

**The true/ best immigrant identity which Turks, who migrated from Bulgaria to Turkey, constructed, experienced and represented in narratives**

***Historical background of the Turkish Migrations from Bulgaria to Turkey***

The Turks of Bulgaria, the presence of whom in the Bulgarian territory dates back to as early as the 4th century, became both a minority and an immigrant society after Bulgaria broke away from the Ottoman Empire and declared its independence at the end of the 19th century. During and after the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-1878, Bulgarians and Russians massacred more than 350,000 Turks and caused about one million Turks to emigrate. Part of the migrants died of hunger and diseases on the way and part of them were killed by Bulgarian attacks. 74,000 immigrants came to Turkey in 1886-1890 and 70,603 in 1832-1902 (McCarthy, 1998; Şimşir, 1986; 1992).

Also during the Balkan Wars, the Bulgarians headed for the Thrace and massacred 200,000 Turks and caused 440,000 Turks to flee and immigrate to Turkey (Halaçoğlu, 1994). Bulgaria continued its pressure on the Turks during and after World War I; however, according to the Turkish-Bulgarian Residence Agreement, which was signed on 18 October 1925, Bulgaria would not prevent discretionary migration of the Turks from then on. In the period from 1923 to 1939, some 200,000 Turks fleeing from the mistreatment of the fascist Bulgarian government immigrated to Turkey. The Turks submitted migration petitions to both Turkish and Bulgarian authorities also after the Russian invasion and the socialist government was brought to power in Bulgaria. In August 1950, Bulgaria asked Turkey to open its borders and receive 220,000 Turks within three months. In this process, Turkey closed its borders when Bulgaria sent not the Turks but Gypsies without a visa. That the borders kept opening and closing mutually due to disputes caused part of the Turks to lose their lives due to hunger and cold weather at the border gates during the 1950-1951 migrations. Some Turks remained on the Bulgarian side although their properties or relatives crossed to Turkey.

After Todor Jivkov came to power in 1956, Bulgaria halted migrations and prohibited even the mention of migration. Especially in the year 1963, the Turks started to submit collective petitions of migration to the Turkish Consulates in Bulgaria. In the face of all these, Jivkov declared those who wanted to migrate to be traitors. Continuing its activities of Bulgarising the Turks, the Jivkov government consented to an agreement as a result of Turkey's pressure and the "Agreement

concerning emigration from the People's Republic of Bulgaria to the Republic of Turkey of Bulgarian nationals of Turkish origin whose close relatives emigrated to Turkey before 1952" was signed between the two countries on 22 March 1968. According to this, those Turks who had relatives who emigrated to Turkey previously would be able to emigrate provided that they documented their family relationships. However, these family relationships had to be first degree ones. Moreover, married children of families, who had first degree consanguinity, were excluded from the scope of emigration.

According to the agreement, the emigrants would be entitled to take with them all their personal and household effects with the exception of those whose export was prohibited. The emigrants would come to Turkey with a status of independent emigrants. That is to say, they would receive or request no aids from the Turkish government. The accommodation, nutrition of the emigrants and rendering them productive would be in the responsibility of their relatives who emigrated previously. Within 10 years, a total of 130,000 emigrants came to Turkey.

Having decreased the Turkish population gradually through oppression, Jivkov embarked upon an operation to eliminate completely the ethnic and religious identities of the remaining Turks. He forced Pomak Turks and then Muslim Gypsies to change their religions and names in 1972-1974 and 1981-1983 respectively. Massacring those who resisted and sending them to torture camps, the government laid siege around those areas highly populated by Turks with military forces and changed the names of Turks by force. In the following process, the Turks were prohibited from speaking their mother tongues, wearing their ethnic attires, holding ethnic and religious ceremonies. Muslim graveyards were destroyed and the Turks were ordered to bury their deceased relatives in Orthodox graveyards and in accordance with Christian traditions. Depriving the Turks of their connections among themselves and with outside, the Bulgarian government made them sign documents stating that they did not want to emigrate (Şimşir, 1986; Alp, 1990).

From 1985 to 1989, staging collective hunger strikes and protest marches, the Turks tried to make their situation to the world public opinion. During this period, lots of Turks were murdered and sent to torture camps. Turning a blind eye to Turkey's initiatives and the pressure put by international organizations and countries initially, Jivkov made a speech through television, calling on to Turkey to

open its borders and receive the Turks. According to the prescribed plan, the Turks would be sent away with their passports under the name of free travel and thus, Bulgaria would not be accountable to the Turks as they did not have an emigrant status. As of 2 June 1989, Bulgaria deported hundreds of thousands of Turks forcing them to leave their belongings, properties, social rights and even spouses and children. From 2 June 1989, when Turkey abolished the visa requirement, to 22 August 1989, when it resumed the practice, a total of 311,862 Turks immigrated to Turkey in groups of three to five thousand immigrants a day.

In the period when the visa requirement was in practice, a total of 34,098 immigrants came to Turkey from 22 August 1989 to May 1990. Bulgaria notified to the Turks it forced to emigration that they would remain as Bulgarian citizens if they preserved the passports they had, if they did not receive an ID card in Turkey and if they returned to Bulgaria within six months following the emigration. However, this promise was not kept and the Turks were not allowed to settle into their former houses or villages and they were prevented from maintaining their former professions when they returned (Konukman, 1990).

The period to start from that moment on and to reach the present day is an experience of getting to know the new environment, categorizing it, surviving in the face of new difficulties and making sense of life by making new choices and constructing new identities besides ethnic and religious freedoms for the immigrants who came to Turkey. And for those Turks who returned to Bulgaria and those who did not emigrate at all, this period is an experience of surviving amid the economic and social difficulties brought about by the regime shift that occurred in Bulgaria in 1989 and the liberalization process and accommodating themselves to the new circumstances. Though the truths that have been experienced and interpreted are in need of being researched and questioned, Bulgaria openly admitted to have oppressed the Turks in the past and guaranteed the rights and freedoms of minorities in the 1991 Constitution, reinstating the civil, lingual, religious and ethnic rights of both the immigrants and the Turks of Bulgaria in the process to follow.

### ***Contextual and performative characteristics of the narratives***

The group of narrators of the narratives which constitutes the subject matter of this study is composed of Turkish women who immigrated to Turkey



from Bulgaria. The fact that the narrators consist of women only is not my personal preference; this rather arises from the fact that female immigrants of Bulgaria both regard themselves as the active subjects of the experience of immigration and they claim that the boundaries and symbols of the immigrant group identity have been constructed and are maintained by them. In these women's opinion, what differentiates the immigrant women both from the native population living in Turkey and the community choosing to live back in Bulgaria is that they are brave and active individuals who can make their own decisions.

In terms of level of education, their social and domestic roles and positions and their visions of world, those who immigrated in 1989 are different from other women who immigrated at different dates. Almost all of these women are individuals who completed at least high school, who have a profession, who are socially active and who have equal rights with men within the household. Their world is not limited to family life and the surroundings of the house. All these characteristics cannot be said to apply for the women who immigrated at other dates because, unlike the immigrant women of 1989, those women did not have the opportunity to pursue their studies, acquire a profession or become social individuals within the social life equally with men due to the social, economic and political situation of Bulgaria at the time in question. This generalization applies especially for women who immigrated to Turkey before 1978. Particularly the young ones of the women who emigrated from Bulgaria in 1978 exhibit different characteristics because in these years, it became widespread for women to receive education and have a profession.

The narrators immigrated to Turkey from Bulgaria in 1951, 1971, 1972, 1977, 1978, 1989, 1990, and 1991. Therefore, not all the narrators are narrating the same event and experience of emigration but events of emigration experienced at different dates. According to the immigrants, these differences differentiate them from one another in a serious way.

The narrators differ from each other in terms of age. Those immigrants who emigrated when they were young or middle aged define themselves as the 'lost generation'. From the immigrants' perspective, that they had to work right after immigrating caused them to perceive and experience the differences and negativities of the environment they emigrated to in a more intense and bitter way. First of all, it was them to communicate and interact with the native population. This situation has caused a separate generation identity and group to

be formed among the immigrants. In their opinion, they are the most aggrieved group within the immigrant hierarchy. Having or not having worked after immigrating to Turkey is an argument immigrants use to otherwise one another among themselves.

Personal experience narratives are acts, texts and events of performance that arise in dependence with the quality and direction of the communication and interaction developed situationally by a certain narrator and listener at a certain time and space. All performance, like all communication, is situated, enacted, and rendered meaningful within socially defined situational contexts (Bauman, 1992: 46). Contextual characteristics determine and explain what is narrated in narratives, how it is narrated and why it is narrated in a certain way. Personal experience narratives are not predetermined, fixed texts. Each narrator makes certain choices concerning the content, structure, style and meaning of her / his narrative according to the qualities of the environment s/he is in, the content and quality of the communication in this environment and the characteristics of the listener(s) who listens to her/him and who s/he interacts with. Since the emerging narrative text and performance is completely contextually structured, it is of a unique characteristic (Bauman, 1989, 1992; Ben-Amos, 1993; Georges, 1969; Langellier & Peterson, 1992; Langellier, 1989; Mishler, 1986).

During the performance of the narrative identity, taking the characteristics and identities of those who interact in the environment, the narrator develops a situational perception concerning her/his identity and selfhood. However, it is not a matter of question for this perception to be reflected as is, which is developed intellectually. Determining 'how s/he wants to be known and viewed' within the contextual situations which also include the other people's characteristics of identity, the narrator filters her/his own identity perception and reconstructs it in accordance with the context. The narrative, in this context, is strategically arranged and performed in accordance with the selfhood and identity the person wants to present and in such a way that supports them (Bamberg, 1997, Dundes, 1989; Goffman, 1959; Langellier, 2001; Markham-Shaw, 1997; Ochs & Capps, 1996; Riessman, 2002; Wilson & Ross, 2003). When narrating her/his personal experience, the narrator excludes some information that is contrary to the identity that s/he wants to represent, exaggerates some pieces of information and can sometimes tell a lie. However, all of these are meaningful and functional arrangements taking place in the interactive context in question.

Contextual approach brings forward the directing effect of my identity on the performance of the narratives that constitute the material of this study as the primary contextual factor. The fact that I am an immigrant, that I have known them for a while, and that I am of the same sex enabled me to participate in environments of conversation which non-immigrants would not be able to participate in. During each narrative performance different from one another, I, even in my quietest state, was someone who immigrated in 1989 or an immigrant who chose to remain in Turkey after emigration for the resource people depending on the subject of the conversation and the identities of the speakers.

The informants live in a neighborhood which is highly populated by immigrants and they have neighborhood and kinship relationships. Immigrant women come together more often to chat especially during summer time. Summer time is also the period when immigrants update their intra-group identity categorization. The reason for this is that the immigrants want to certainly visit Bulgaria during summer time and share their up-to-date information with one another. Therefore, when the women come together, they start their conversation by asking the person who has just come back from Bulgaria about her experiences first. As one or more of the listeners are preparing to visit Bulgaria, the observations of the visitor and the expectations of those who are going to go to Bulgaria turns into a discussion of identification which also includes those immigrants who are and who are not in the given setting after a short while.

### ***Contextually constructed hierarchical borders of immigrant identity***

#### *New immigrants versus Former immigrants*

For the immigrants of Bulgaria who live in Turkey today, the most important criterion that determines their group identity is the fact that they immigrated to Turkey. When looked at from outside this boundary, the immigrant group is seen as a homogenous entirety. However, the immigrant group and identity has sub-groups and identities based on different criteria. The existence of these sub-groups and identities is a group-specific problem which mainly arises and develops contextually and cannot be realized from outside the broadest boundaries of the immigrant identity. The sub-identity category of the immigrant group and identity, which is of secondary importance, is based on in which period and at which date they immigrated.

The immigrant group of each period has a tendency to otherise those groups of immigrants that immigrated before or after itself and claim the superiority of its own identity over them. The key criteria taken as a basis are the circumstances the immigrants were in and the problems they experienced prior to immigration, the opportunities they had while immigrating and their way of immigrating, whether the circumstances they are in after immigration are better or worse, whether efforts they make and the accomplishments they achieve as immigrants after immigration are more or fewer. Setting out from these criteria, each group of immigrants claims it was 'aggrieved' more than the immigrants and 'suffered' more. Therefore, the immigrant group hierarchy has a ranking based on the grievance before, during and after migration.

The group of immigrants all immigrants- no matter when they emigrated- position at the top based on the difficulties experienced during and after immigration are the immigrants who immigrated in or before 1951. The most important reason for this is that the Turks who continued to live in Bulgaria and did not immigrate yet after the immigrations of 1950 and before formed a collective repertoire of narratives about under how difficult circumstances the old migrations were experienced. This situation has created an unquestionable presupposition in immigrants concerning the old immigrations and the hierarchical position of immigrants even before they immigrated.<sup>1</sup> In a setting where there are immigrants of 1971, 1972, 1978 and 1989, W24, who is a 1972 immigrant, and W2, who is a 1978 immigrant recount which group of immigrants was aggrieved more as follows:

'W2: The 51 (immigration) was harder...

W24: Those who came in 1951 suffered very much and so did those who came in 1935. We didn't suffer that much, they only had their lives left, they were sent to the East.'

Following this, W2 and W27, who are 1978 immigrants, turned to the immigrants of 1989 and said: 'You are free riders' (W2) and 'You came when

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<sup>1</sup>For further information on the mythical narratives depicting the immigrations of 1950 and before and the difficulties experienced by the immigrants, see (Kaderli, 2008).

everything was better' (W27). Following this sentence, supporting what has been said, W26, who is a 1978, said:

'Those who came later (1989) came with a lot of previous suffering; however, when they came here, the state did certain things for them. The state gave them foodstuff and other things but they still didn't like Turkey. I didn't like either but I can't say anything to them...'

Naturally, these sentences caused those immigrants of 1989 to defend themselves:

'W24 (1972): Daughter, after we immigrated to Turkey in 1972, those remained there (in Bulgaria) were very comfortable there”.

W3 (1989): If you take a look at who came earlier, it was always those who remained who were comfortable. Now ask my mother (1978), we(1989) were comfortable.

W24 (1972): Be sure, they were comfortable. We worked but couldn't get any money; those who stayed (1989) started getting money without working.

W26 (1978): I went to Bulgaria for a visit; your grandmother told me to see you. And I saw them (1989), they were so comfortable. When we lived there, they didn't pay us properly. We worked hard for the infidel, they gave us nothing. And then I visited Bulgaria in 1982, people were in abundance.

W1 (1989): Did everything get abundant there just within two years!?

W26 (1978): There was such abundance to them then. When I came back to Turkey, I told people not to ask their children to come to Turkey. I said they are very comfortable and have a lot of ease. We were striving hard in Turkey at the time; we went to people's houses as cleaning women. After my visit, I never told anyone to come to

Turkey. But later, the infidel oppressed them(1989) very bad, they were beaten to leave the country.'

According to the immigrants of 1989, the other is those who immigrated especially in 1978 because the immigrants of 1978 did not suffer much from Bulgarians in Bulgaria, they immigrated under very favorable circumstances and most important of all, they brought all their belongings and properties they wanted with them. Furthermore, the immigrants of 1978 did not experience financial troubles much after they immigrated as they immigrated under favorable circumstances and they were not excluded by the native population as much as the immigrants of 1989 were. Among the immigrants of 1978, especially women started to dress cloths showing less and look at the world in a more conservative fashion. This situation extremely annoyed the immigrants of 1989 because the immigrants of 1978 claimed that they dressed to open clothes and acted in a very carefree way; they put pressure on them to wear clothes showing less, saying that people did not welcome such behavior in Turkey.

For those immigrants of 1970–1978, the immigrants of 1989 suffered more and experienced more pressure than they did in Bulgaria; however, they at least received some aid from the state after they immigrated. Moreover, although they experienced a lot of oppression, some of them forgot about this act of oppression very soon and they couldn't bear the difficulties they encountered after immigrating and returned to Bulgaria. However, the immigrants of 1970-1978 stood the difficulties they experienced after immigrating and never talked about returning.

The strongest criticism of the immigrants of 1978 about of 1989 is that they talk about Bulgaria continuously, that they keep saying they miss Bulgaria and keep comparing here and there on a continuous basis, that they sublime the positive aspects of Bulgaria and, above all, that they go to Bulgaria whenever possible and that they buy houses or land again in Bulgaria, saying that they want to live their old ages in Bulgaria. And for the immigrants of 1989, the only reason why they keep going to Bulgaria is not because they miss there. For them, going to Bulgaria now is important in terms of seeing what they did by immigrating, what they gave up and what they gained because those Turks who did not emigrate or went back to Bulgaria after emigrating are in rather a bad situation both materially and morally. This situation of those back in Bulgaria shows the immigrants that they did

something right. Comparing their situation with them, they see what they achieved after emigrating. This is also an opportunity to show and manifest their superiority as immigrants who have overcome everything to those remaining back in or returning to Bulgaria.

Another argument that groups of immigrants use to otherise one another is the relationship they have with the immigrants of previous periods, the experiences they have gone through and the way the previous immigrants treated the new immigrants and their attitude against them. Each group of immigrants immigrated with the expectation that the previous immigrants would help them. The immigrants of all periods claim that the previous immigrants did not help them much but they helped those who came after them a lot.

W13, who is an immigrant of 1972, puts the situation in question as follows in a setting where immigrants of 1989 were in majority:

‘They (1951) were surprised and jealous when they saw us (1972). They said these have this and these have that, they begrudged us what we had. Anyway, we gave some of what we had to them. But we were not jealous of those (1989) that came after us. They had everything. There was this woman living next to us, she was an immigrant of 1951. She still had not bought a house. But we did not eat or drink but saved’.

The immigrants of 1968-1978 think that the immigrants of 1951 showed quite a poor performance in terms of the accomplishments an immigrant is supposed to achieve, that they grew lazy and became assimilated within the course of time. They were also annoyed by the fact that the immigrants of 1951 were conservative. Each group of immigrants holds the previous generation of immigrants responsible for becoming more and more conservative within the course of time. W1 (1989) puts how she observed the lives of previous immigrants and how she contributed to their change within the course of time as follows in an environment where immigrants of 1989 were in majority:

‘Saniye, who was a neighbor, came to me and said [You’ll get accustomed.] And I said to myself [I’ll lose if I get used to, this would mean going 50 years back.] When we came, your Aunty Fatma had a black scarf on her head and she had a long skirt on. They opened when

we came. They were all wearing a headscarf. Zifi said [That is it, Sister. Fatma should see you and open a bit.] Now they'll always say [When you came, we recovered our morale, we opened. They were scared when they came. They got off the ground when we came' (W1).

Another reason why immigrants who immigrated to Turkey at different dates have developed negative judgments about one another is that those immigrants who immigrated previously and those who immigrated newly failed initially to understand one another's behaviors, appearances and the state of mind one another was in. Based on observations from outside, each group of immigrants has envied the other group of immigrants, thinking that they were doing better and they did not need anything. These impressions have caused especially newly-immigrated immigrants to have feelings of fear and complex that they would not be able to overcome the difficulties after immigration and reach the living standards of the former immigrants they envy. This has naturally caused the new immigrants to nourish a feeling somewhere between pretension and jealousy against the former immigrants. The following dialogue between W5, who is a 1978 immigrant, and W1, who is a 1989 immigrant, is quite remarkable:

'W1 (1989): When we saw you dressed so beautifully, we thought you were very happy with your jobs.

W5 (1978): You reckon! I had an internal conflict. I had it badly. About work, for instance, how does it feel to work in a job you don't like all your life? And the environment is different as well; your husband will leave at home and go the coffeehouse. The job is already tiring. And the environment at home is different, too; you are left behind with the elderly. It is such a life that you work from 8 in the morning till 5 in the evening for ten years with no social activities after you come home in the evening. But now we're fine about everything. When I went to visit Bulgaria, I envied them (1989).

W1 (1989): Oh really, we envied you!



W5 (1978): They(1989) seemed to be living more comfortably. They weren't suffering pain at the time yet. Do you know when I said I'm glad to have come to Turkey? When they started to force people to change their names, then I said I'm glad to have come; it was worth all those sorrows and suffering. We spent the most beautiful days and times of our lives back in Bulgaria. In 1989, my brother seemed to have cracked up. What had happened to that man with all that hair? He had gone bald.

W1 (1989): When we came, you had a red blouse with a joint here. I loved it.

W5 (1978): Oh honey, I wish you had asked me and I'd have given it to you.

W1 (1989): I said to myself "God, when are we going to be like this?"

W5 (1978): We felt the same thing.

W1 (1989): Fatma bought my mother a cardigan and she had a scarf, too. She had them on when she came to visit us.(after immig.) I wanted them from my mother to wear them when going to work and my mother would take them back and put them in the chest again. Ah, how I wished her to tell me to keep them. Later, I had a lot of them, too. I gave her a bunch of them but one doesn't understand the other in those initial days.'

As can be seen, that immigrants who immigrated to Turkey at different times or under different circumstances share their immigration experiences with one another has an extremely important function in order for them to correct the prejudices and different perceptions they have developed about one another and to understand one another better by showing empathy. Thus, realizing the borders they have constructed among themselves are not indeed that sharp or deep, immigrants collectively strengthen their immigrant consciousness and feelings, which unify them at a more important point.

*Immigrants versus Returnees and Non-Immigrants*

The claims of superiority and differentness of the immigrant identity, which is constructed in accordance with the criterion of having immigrated and remained in Turkey despite all problems and difficulties, are based on the fact that those Turks who have returned or never emigrated are excessively criticized and otherised on a continuous basis. This behavior of otherisation is an inevitable act immigrants have to perform so that they can feel better, realize that they did something right by immigrating and shortly, they can view their selfhood and lives meaningful in the world surrounding them. In a sense, it is tendency to try to feel the appreciation the immigrants expect from the native population in Turkey by making up for it through certain mechanisms they have developed.

Having immigrated making all sorts of material and spiritual self-sacrifice just for the sake of protecting their language, culture, identity and belief, immigrants think that they showed such great heroism and achieved such a great accomplishment that is worthy of appreciation. This situation has naturally created a great expectation in the immigrants that they would be appreciated by the Turkish society when they came to Turkey. However, the immigrants realized after they immigrated that majority of Turkey's native population, except for some people, was not even aware of their presence, that they did not know what they had experienced, and that they did not even regard the immigrants as Turks.<sup>2</sup> This situation caused the immigrants to think that their self-sacrifice and act of immigration were meaningless, in vain and worthless.

The immigrants, who used to identify the concept of being a Turk with Turkey and see them as the reflection of each other before immigrating, started to evaluate these concepts separately in order to protect the value of their own identity and their act after immigrating. According to this, Turkey may have lots of negative aspects; however, being a Turk is independent from this and its value is a concept which is not linked with the circumstances the country is in. Even if nobody is aware of the fact that the immigrants behaved heroically for the sake of being a Turk, they have insisted in regarding and making others see themselves and their

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<sup>2</sup>For detailed information on the ways the immigrants of Bulgaria otherise the native population living in Turkey, see (Kaderli, 2008: 382-405).

act as valuable, superior and meaningful both as a result of their own belief and because of the failure of those who returned to Bulgaria after immigration and those who never immigrated and remain in Bulgaria in this challenging examination.

While it is mainly the immigrants of 1989 who criticize those who returned or remained in Bulgaria in the most rigid way, the immigrants of previous periods criticize and otherise those who returned or remained back in Bulgaria in the same way. However, the immigrants who immigrated before 1989 must take the following important aspect into consideration in their thoughts and critiques concerning the issue: Following the immigrations before 1989, the immigrants did not have the opportunity to return to or visit Bulgaria frequently. We believe that this situation ensured that they come to terms with the post-immigration process and the circumstances they were in easier. It is extremely difficult to express an opinion about how the immigrants who did not have the chance to go back would have behaved if they had had the chance to return.

The former immigrants say that they suffered more as they did not have the chance to go back after immigration; indeed, they did not experience a hesitation about whether to go back in this situation they were obliged to be in. According to the immigrants of 1989, the former immigrants did not have an idea of going back because they did not have such a chance anyway and they came to terms with the circumstances they were in without living a dilemma.

That some immigrants returned to Bulgaria following the immigration of 1989 is an important argument the immigrants of 1968–1978 use to support their group identity's claim of superiority:

'Once you come to Turkey, you hold on to life, there is no hope for the rest any more. People did not return at our time; it never occurred to us anyway. Why should I return if I came here as an immigrant? Haven't they seen any hardship whatsoever? I call those who returned delicate ones. They got used to abundance there. I think they did wrong. Could they have lived here if they had hold on to life here? Sure, they could have' (W15).

The immigrants have started criticizing the Turks who returned to or remained in Bulgaria in a more rigid and self-confident way especially at recent

times when they have overcome all material difficulties and reached an extremely good standard of living in socio-economic terms. For the immigrants, they have passed the exam of immigration lasting more than twenty years. For them, today no one, including the Turks who returned and remained in Bulgaria, can claim that they immigrated in vain or their immigrating did not bring any good. That the minority and citizenship rights of the immigrants of 1989 have been returned by Bulgaria and that the immigrants can go to Bulgaria comfortably and at frequent intervals have had significant influence in the formation of this approach. The immigrants interpret the collapse of the socialist regime after they immigrated as a twist of faith in connection with themselves.

Although the immigrants state that they want to hear an explicit acknowledgement and confession from the others, in fact, that this does not come true further nourishes their own group identity's superiority claim. In other words, the fact that both groups maintain their borders and discourse in the same way is more functional in terms of the continuity of the groups. Similarly, though the immigrants state that they feel sorry that their homeland where they used to live in the past is unrecognizable now, they feel partially glad that the environment they left behind maintains its negative condition in the same way, just for the sake of feeling they did something good by emigrating. The immigrants criticize the living conditions of the others in the framework in the conditions they are in and the means they have at the moment. Ignoring the traumatic impact process of certain changes brought about by immigration, they basically ascribe the current negative conditions of those who did not emigrate or returned to Bulgaria, which arise from political and socio-economic reasons, to the fact that they did not emigrate, attributing their living standards which they are used to now to having immigrated and not having returned:

'Now when I go to Bulgaria, it doesn't make me any good. I see people get up at three in the morning to milk the cows or to go to work. We sleep here late like pashas. And pensions are low back in there. Oh, how much people suffer there. Now my money is deposited in the bank and I go and draw my money. I can stay there (in Bulgaria) for a month or for a week as I wish. I go there whenever I feel like going.'  
(W18).

According to the immigrants, just like those who returned, those Turks who remained will not admit to have made a big mistake not emigrating. Therefore, the immigrants state that they deliberately exaggerate their behaviors, speeches and attitudes indeed during their stay in Bulgaria against those Turks who perceive their behaviors or attitudes as showing off or humiliating them:

'Ok, here is what it is but those who remained do not openly say you succeeded, you suffered a lot; we couldn't go because we couldn't bother. They can't say [We couldn't do this but we should have done]. If they said this, we would feel sorry for them anyway but they won't say this. As they don't say this, they seem to have come to terms with that cruelty and we get angry once again. It's always good to be on the safe side, we at least managed to do this. (She adds laughing) We are on the safe side but we can't do without going to the other side! This makes us good; we say [Look, we did the right thing] once again. Look, what Sister Shehzade said to me a couple of days ago; now she's going to Bulgaria for a visit soon, I said [You've chosen yourself a very ostentatious dress]. And she said [Well, where we are coming from should be visible; let them see it]. They are starving now but they are trying to cover it up. They did that mistake once in any case; they don't want to acknowledge it.' (W3).

Most of the Turks living in Bulgaria today criticise and otherise the immigrants on the grounds that they have become similar to Turkey's native population and naturalised and that they have lost their language and culture. Therefore, those environments and times which the two groups come together in today are tense and insincere environments where they simply involve themselves in a contest of superiority with each other, where they reflect things in an exaggerated way and try to impose on the other that they are right. Though this relationship and communication pattern estranges the two groups even further from each other in time, this situation is the sole source and way of defense available to the both groups in order for them to be able to regard themselves and their living as meaningful and acceptable in the situation the both groups are in.

## **Conclusion**

Identification is a process of otherisation and this process emerges also within a group of immigrants based on contextual differences specific to experiences of immigration and the ways these are interpreted, as seen among the Turkish immigrants of Bulgaria. However, the identities within this group of immigrants and the way these identities are manifested cannot be observed based on material elements but rather narrative manifestations. This is particularly the case about the manifestation of the 'immigrants who immigrated in a certain year' identity, which is the most important sub-identity of the group.

Today, it is impossible to realize that there is a conflict of identity among those immigrants except for their conversation environments. However, the immigrants of each period otherise one another because their experiences and the meanings they attribute to these experiences are different even if they are the members of the same family. These immigrants, who used to define themselves within the same identity as Turkish and Muslim, otherise one another today based on such criteria as having lived comfortably or under harsh conditions before immigrating, whether or not having brought their household goods and belongings with them during immigration, and having suffered more or less after immigrating as they need to do so. Based on this, the group which deserves the identity of immigrants is the one which experienced the immigration under the most difficult conditions. Each group of immigrants of the same period lays emphasis on its superiority only in environments where there is nobody else. However, in environments where the immigrants of various periods are together, based on numerical superiority, the immigrants either involve themselves in heated discussions or voice what they want to say through pronouns such as "them, the new ones, the old ones" indirectly instead of addressing people in the environment directly.

The hot topic of discussion among immigrants of different periods is which group has reached the best position economically based on the times that has passed since immigration. While the discussion of superiority was seen only between new and old immigrants in identity narratives of immigrants, two sub-groups have joint this discussion since the immigrants started to visit Bulgaria after they regained their right of citizenship. These two groups are the Turks who returned to Bulgaria after the immigration of 1989 and those who never

immigrated. The experience of visiting Bulgaria has enabled the immigrants to add new meanings to their immigrant identity and immigration experience from their perspective. Having immigrated for an ethnic and religious identity is not something which is continuously appreciated in the immigrated environment especially by the native population. However, the immigrants had such an expectation of appreciation when immigrating, which has disappointed them and caused them to turn in upon themselves. This need of being appreciated of the immigrants, which was not satisfied after immigration, was satisfied when they saw those Turks who returned or never immigrated were living in negative conditions during their visits to Bulgaria.

Those Turks who returned after immigration or who never immigrated have identified the immigrants of different periods as the members of a group of immigrants who ventured to emigrate leaving all sort of financial means behind for their ethnic and religious identity and who chose to remain in Turkey overcoming all difficulties. Although they involve themselves in intense identity discussions as the old and new immigrants during their daily communications, the immigrants will lead up to talking about the situation of the Turks who returned or never immigrated after a short while and enable themselves to curtail their differences and derive a satisfactory feeling of unity concerning their identity.

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