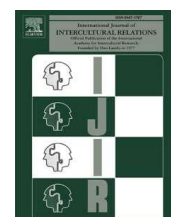


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Privacy versus intimacy: Social interactions in Norway

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ABSTRACT

Based on 71 semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted with Turkey-originated migrants who live in Norway, this article discusses whether and what kinds of differences Turkish migrants in Norway perceive in the notions of privacy and intimacy between the Turkish and Norwegian contexts, and the implications of this perceived difference for their social interactions in Norway. While many of them value the social recognition of the right to privacy in Norway, they also think that avoidance of asking personal questions creates barriers in establishing close relationships and intimacy. For them, this contrasts with Turkey, where even strangers can easily ask personal questions or make comments that violate others' privacy, but where people can easily establish warm, close, and deeper relationships. While they think that Norwegians are generally distant and reserved in interpersonal relationships, they find them more distant in their relationships with non-Norwegians. They think that the suspicion towards and fear of foreigners goes together with Norwegian people's preference to interact with people who are very similar to them. Based on the experiences and comparisons of these migrants who have lived in (at least) two country contexts, this article discusses the relationship between privacy and intimacy as one where the expansion of the former weakens the latter. Considering privacy as a process of boundary regulation where individuals control how much contact they will maintain with others, culturally induced differences in expectations about where to draw that boundary creates barriers in communication between individuals who were socialized in different country contexts.

Introduction

This article is based on the findings of the research project titled "Perceptions of Turkey-originated Migrants in Norway about Identity, Belonging, and Discrimination". Although it was not one of the main foci of this project, during the interviews, I frequently heard my respondents reflecting on differences in interpersonal communication in Norway and Turkey, and the implications of these differences in terms of the relationships' "depth" as they repeatedly referred to. As I will discuss further in the following sections, most of the differences they mentioned and described in terms of interpersonal communication were related to different notions and degrees of privacy in these two country contexts and how these different notions of privacy are linked to different degrees and kinds of intimacy. Therefore, as the researcher and interpreter, I have translated their vocabulary of "coldness of Norwegians", "warmth of Mediterranean people", "depth of relationships", "freedom in personal affairs", "nosiness of others", etc. into a discussion of privacy and intimacy.

When I started working on this paper, I came across a paragraph written by Kaleb (2002) which has puzzled me:

The second element that facilitates acceptance of being watched and known by invisible and anonymous forces is democratic

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gregariousness. I say democratic gregariousness because I think that democratic culture encourages easy contact with strangers and not only with, say, neighbors or even fellow citizens... Such quick, easy, and rarely remembered intimacy, which almost every democratic person engages in, has undeniable charm. Perhaps it has more than charm: it is a sign of immediate acceptance of another human being on experientially equal terms. Lines of class, ethnicity, color, and religion are crossed with such frequency and rapidity that they grow fainter and, in the long run, somewhat less important... Furthermore, such exposure to strangers... manifests a democratic trust in others, just as a conditioned reserve may indicate a fearful guardedness. (p.288).

The reason why I found this paragraph puzzling is related to how my respondents repeatedly compared the Turkish and Norwegian contexts. Many of my respondents described the Turkish context as one in which it is possible and even easy to get into contact with many strangers almost daily, whereas they talked about it as a very rare or almost impossible occurrence in the case of Norway. When we consider the fact that Norway is considered to have an established democratic culture and a society where individuals have high levels of generalized trust, how can we interpret my respondents' repeated portrayal of Norway as a context where individuals are very reserved and it is almost impossible to interact with strangers? Alternatively, although Turkey is frequently described as having a stumbling democratic culture and as a context where individuals do not have high levels of generalized trust, how can we explain my respondents' perception that one can easily interact with strangers in Turkey? Is there really a connection between an established democratic culture and self-limitation of privacy so that one allows to be watched and known by strangers, as suggested by Kaleb (2002)?

This article aims to reflect on these questions based on 71 semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted with Turkey-originated migrants who live in Norway (in/around Oslo or Drammen). In the migration studies literature on Norway, most of the studies are written by Norwegian scholars and they are *about* migrants. In one sense, the literature is dominated by studies that tell us how the majority society sees the migrants. This study aims to *reverse the gaze* by portraying how migrants see the members of the majority society and the interactions with them. This is a major contribution of this study. There are cross-cultural differences in the notions of privacy and intimacy. This study aims to discuss those differences by reflecting on the perceptions of individuals from a migrant group about the majority society individuals' notions of privacy and intimacy. The article first addresses the question of whether and what kinds of differences Turkish migrants living in Norway perceive in the notions of privacy and intimacy between the Turkish and Norwegian contexts. Second, it discusses the consequences of this perceived difference in terms of their social interactions in Norway. Finally, there will be a discussion of the links between a democratic culture and the right to privacy. The article argues that these migrants refer to different types and degrees of privacy that exist in these two country contexts. They consider Norway as a context where the right to privacy is widely recognized, although migrants' right to privacy is occasionally violated especially if that migrant is originally from a Muslim-majority country. On the other side, they think of Turkey as a context where the right to privacy is not recognized as an established principle in social relationships and where individuals frequently violate each other's privacy. While many of them consider a context where the right to privacy is widely recognized (Norwegian) as emancipatory, they also think that the same context also has limitations in terms of establishing intimacy. Based on the experiences and comparisons of migrants who have lived in (at least) two country contexts, this article discusses the relationship between privacy and intimacy as one where the expansion of the former area weakens the latter. Considering privacy as a process of boundary regulation (Altman, 1975; Derlega & Chaikin, 1977; Lampinen, 2015; Page et al., 2019) where individuals control how many contacts they will maintain with others, culturally-induced differences in expectations about where to draw that boundary creates barriers in communication between individuals who were socialized in different country contexts.

The right to privacy and intimacy

Privacy is a flexible and complex concept (Millett et al. 2007). It has been interpreted in diverse ways during different periods and in different contexts. As Zabihzadeh et al. (2019, p.358) argue, "it has been defined as a "right" or "entitlement" in legal research..., as the "state of limited access or isolation" in philosophical and psychological literature..., and sometimes as "control" in the social sciences." The distinction between public and private spheres exists in many societies. Yet, there are differences in terms of how rigid this distinction is and the scope of these two spheres. Privacy has multiple faces: "it might refer to one's rights over one's body and the secrets of the mind; to certain activities that one typically performs alone or with a select group of partners...; to physical divisions between one's home, its immediate vicinity, and the world beyond; and, more broadly, to places ... that were outside the purview of the state." (Ayalon, 2011, p.514).

Although the notion of privacy has existed for a long time, it has more recently become a generally accepted right. As Lukács (2016) discusses, the modern notion of privacy first appeared in the study "The Right to Privacy" by Brandeis and Warren (1890), where they defined privacy as "the right to be let alone" (cited in Lukács, 2016, p.256). In this work, Brandeis and Warren (1890, p.206) mention "a general right to privacy for thoughts, emotions, and sensations and (that) these should receive the same protection, whether expressed in writing, or conduct, in conversation, in attitudes, or facial expression". Brandeis and Warren's article has been denoted as "the most influential law review article ever published" (Etzioni, 2008). However, their definition of privacy as the right to be let alone has been criticized for being too broad (Solove, 2002). Lukács (2016) states that since the time of the publication of Brandeis and Warren's work, the notion of privacy has evolved and become a basic human right in "occidental societies". To bring more clarity to the concept, Solove (2002) has summarized different conceptions of privacy under six headings:

(1) the right to be let alone... (2) limited access to the self-the ability to shield oneself from unwanted access by others; (3) secrecy-the concealment of certain matters from others; (4) control over personal information- the ability to exercise control over information about oneself (5) personhood-the protection of one's personality, individuality, and dignity; and (6) intimacy-control over, or limited access to, one's intimate relationships or aspects of life. (p.1088).

In this work, Solove (2002) has also proposed to conceptualize privacy contextually by looking at particular practices and argues that certain matters, like the family, the body, and the home have been understood as private in Western societies. Considering the emphasis on “occidental” or “Western” societies in these different texts concerning the notion of privacy, we can ask whether privacy is considered as important among all peoples or whether “there are cultures in which privacy as such is not recognized and institutionalized” (Schoeman, 1984, p.201). Alternatively, we can take into consideration Garvey’s (2005, p.159) reminder that “privacy is not an absolute but a matter of degree” and reflect on different degrees of privacy in different social settings. As a related but separate question, we can also ask whether some areas of life are inherently private (for everyone) or whether privacy is culturally conditioned, privacy having different contents in different social contexts.

The idea of privacy is a modern phenomenon and it gained unprecedented dimensions due to the changes that came with the Industrial Revolution (Salecl, 2002). Currently, the most recent technological improvements have both extended privacy and also brought the possibilities for new forms of invasion of it (Agre and Rotenberg, 1998; Holtzman, 2006; Van Den Hoven, 2008; Floridi, 2016; Price, 2020). However, regardless of the additional dimensions it has gained, the idea of respect is at the core of the notion of privacy. “Privacy concerns some part of the subject’s inner freedom, which the community or other people have no right to violate...” (Salecl, 2002, p.3) and the notion of respect that the right to privacy refers to is “an imaginary relationship that the subject has with another subject, or, better, with the symbolic status that this other subject temporarily assumes” (p.3). The different rights that are endowed with the right to privacy are rooted in an initial idea of personhood. The right to privacy is a basic right and as Kateb (2001) argues,

...every violation of a basic right, just by being the suppression of a vital claim or interest, is also a failure to respect the personhood of a human being. In being improperly coerced, a person is also being held in contempt. A person is being treated, say, as if he or she were a child rather than an adult, or were a mere means to an end... (p.270).

Consequently, a rights-bearing individual does not think of oneself at the disposal of others. As Kateb (2001) argues, there might be violations of privacy that hurt our personhood, although these violations are legally allowed to continue. The right to privacy is about the right to disclose oneself only to those individuals one has chosen and define the conditions under which one will be known and by whom (p.287). However, individuals can choose to limit this right according to their levels of discretion. As Hearst (1990) argues, the right to privacy is fundamental for individuality. It allows for the creation of a space around the self which is not accessed by others and “within which the individual can exercise his or her own moral choices” (p.271). Consequently, the right to privacy is crucial for the establishment of autonomy and selfhood.

The contemporary literature on privacy is mainly dominated by studies that focus on internet privacy and the impact of (and the risks imposed by) new technologies and social media on privacy. There are fewer recent studies that look at privacy in the context of interpersonal relationships. Moreover, cross-cultural variation in the notion of privacy has not been sufficiently explored especially in sociological literatures. There are several studies in psychology that look at the cultural differences in the understandings of privacy. For instance, in their study where they compared the conceptual representations of privacy in the US and Iran, Zabihzadeh et al. (2019) found similarities related to privacy along the dimension of physical vs. informational concerns, while cultural differences emerged in another dimension, the extent to which individualism vs. collectivism was stressed. “While ‘personal privacy’ and an individual’s relationship with the government was important for American adults, the main focus for Iranian adults was “familial privacy” and family-centered living.” (Zabihzadeh et al., 2019, p.357) In another study, Newell (1998) compared the definitions and functions of privacy for students from Ireland, Senegal, and the United States. The study found important similarities in “the reasons why subjects required privacy, the affect that was associated with a desire for privacy, the definition of privacy as a condition of the person, the duration of the average privacy experience and the change in affect at the completion of the experience” (Newell, 1998, p.357). The majority of the students from all three countries reported “not being disturbed” as the main element of privacy and “grief, fatigue, and the need to focus” as the major affective factors connected to seeking privacy. Hence, the study has indicated the existence of several universals in the notions of privacy. In a different way, in a study where American and Turkish students were compared in terms of privacy regulation and perception of crowding, Kaya & Weber (2003) found that American students wanted more privacy in their residence hall rooms than American students and males wanted more privacy than females in both groups.

The works mentioned above, as well as several others that look at cross-cultural differences in privacy, are studies in psychology. There is a limited sociological literature on the subject. Second, the majority of the studies on privacy are based on quantitative methodologies and aim to measure and compare different elements of privacy in different contexts. There is scant literature of qualitative studies which look at subjects’ understandings of cross-cultural differences in privacy, especially in migration contexts. Garvey’s study (2005) of domestic borders in the Norwegian town of Skien is one of the few exceptions where Norwegian and Somali households and their perceptions of domestic boundaries, visibility, and definitions of privacy are analyzed using an ethnographic approach. Finally, although there is an important relationship between notions of privacy and intimacy, few studies have addressed this connection and its relevance. To address these gaps, this study aims to contribute to the literature by a qualitative study on a migrant group’s perceptions about the intercultural differences in privacy and intimacy between two country contexts.

There are different arguments regarding the relationship between privacy and intimacy. On the one hand, there is the argument that institutions of privacy are important for the possibility of intimate relationships. In this line of critique, it is claimed that:

intimacy involves abandoning objectivity- something which cannot occur under the gaze of non-involved points of view. Second... intimacy and trust cannot take place outside the realm of selective self-disclosure. Third... the diversity of social relationships and roles important to social life can survive only in a context of control over which “audiences” have access to the various “faces” we present. (Schoeman, 1984, p.201).

According to this line of argument, intimacy could not exist without the opportunity for privacy, as the exclusion of outsiders is an essential prerequisite for having an intimate relationship (Gerstein, 1978, p.81). On the other side, others criticize the notion that

intimacy cannot occur without privacy. Elliott & Soifer (2010), for instance, argue that privacy is not necessary for intimacy or that “intimacy is possible even if privacy is completely impossible” (p.497). If privacy is the right to keep certain information hidden from others but also having the power to waive that right, “intimacy can then be understood as the relationship that arises when someone does waive the right” (p.493). However, what if there are significant differences between different groups of individuals in terms of how often they waive that right? Psychological literature has emphasized the importance of self-disclosure as an important component of wellness and intimacy with others (Cozby, 1973; Weiss, 1987). Self-disclosure is “telling of the previously unknown so that it becomes shared knowledge” (Joinson & Paine, 2007, p.235), “the process of making the self known to others” (Jourard & Lasakow, 1958, p.91). In an environment where individuals remain discreet even after extended periods of interaction with each other, there seem to be fewer possibilities for establishing intimacy. Privacy refers to the control over the amount of interaction individuals choose to maintain with others and self-disclosure contributes to this boundary regulation process (Derlega & Chaikin, 1977). Establishing friendship is connected to an increase in self-disclosure. However, when there are different culturally induced norms and expectations regarding the extent or amount of self-disclosure, this will have negative consequences in terms of establishing intimacy and friendship.

Colman (2014) discusses non-relating, anti-relating, and the difference between the two in his article on the difficulty of becoming a couple. Although this article does not focus on the relationships of couples, I argue that Colman’s definitions in this article can also be applied to understand and reflect on other relationships. He argues that non-relating is linked to the need for space and solitude, and it is a crucial issue for all relationships. He states that we can tolerate relating to others only within certain limits: “We need not only to be close to others but also to be separate from them, not only dependent but also independent. These needs amount to a need for non-relating which... needs to be held in balance with the need for relating.” (Colman, 2014, p.23) He also asserts that the intrusiveness of the other may lead to anti-relating. In that case, the person’s need for space may result in “an angry turning away” from the other whose difference interferes in a way to “threaten the integrity of the self” (p.23). He stresses that the opposite can also be true: the failure to reach the other may also result in anti-relating. As I will discuss in the following section, individuals who have been socialized in different cultural contexts can “tolerate relating to others” to different degrees. With differences in expectations from relationships, we can expect that both parties of intercultural interactions may opt for anti-relating.

Boundaries and privacy in Norway

As Gullestad (2002) argues, there is a special emphasis on “egalitarian individualism” in Norway and the other Nordic countries. In her studies on egalitarianism in Norway (Gullestad, 1984, 1996, 2002), Gullestad focuses on the Norwegian notion of *likhet*, the most common translation of equality, which also means likeness, similarity, identity, or sameness. She argues that the notion of *likhet* implies that social actors must consider themselves almost the same to feel of equal value. This reasoning leads them to interact in such a way that they focus on similarities, while downplaying differences. She defines this as an interaction style which emphasizes sameness, or what she calls “imagined sameness”. As a consequence of this interaction style, it is considered a problem when the others are perceived as “too different” and differences are masked by avoiding those people. While this style leads to blurring of the dividing lines between social classes, the differences between Norwegians and migrants have become significant:

Many Norwegians now turn to the simultaneous production of differences and call for sameness. In many contexts the ideal of imagined sameness produces a solution (demands for sameness) to a problem it has itself contributed to creating. It is as though an outsider must be created, in order for the internal sameness, unity, and sense of belonging to be confirmed... ‘Immigrants’ are asked to ‘become Norwegian’, at the same time as it is tacitly assumed that this is something they can never really achieve. ‘They’ are often criticized without much corresponding consideration of ‘our’ knowledge of ‘their’ traditions, or ‘our’ ability and willingness to reflect critically upon ‘our’ own. ‘We’ (‘Norwegians’), are thus considered more advanced and hierarchically superior to ‘them’ (‘Muslims’, ‘Pakistanis’, ‘Vietnamese’, ‘Tamils’, ‘our new countrymen from other cultures’, and so on). (Gullestad, 2002, p.59).

Gullestad’s notion of equality as sameness and her arguments related to the inegalitarian and hierarchical consequences of this notion have been used in many recent studies on Norway, as well as other Nordic countries (Bruun et al., 2011; Chinga-Ramirez, 2017; Abram, 2018; Dankertsen & Lo, 2023). As Dankertsen & Lo (2023, p.12) argue, Gullestad’s concept of equality as sameness has continued relevance for understanding the Norwegian society. The social dynamics that Gullestad describes point out the limitations of egalitarian individualism and how hierarchies are produced in those cases where Norwegians are interacting with migrants. Equally important for reflecting on social interaction is understanding the importance of boundaries for Norwegians. As Gullestad (1997, p.21) argues, “Norwegian life is marked... by a passion for boundaries”. She discusses that as a product of the interaction between inherited values and social changes, issues related to boundaries have gained central importance for Norwegians and in contemporary Norway, boundaries are important in everyday life, media, and political discussions. This focus on boundaries is both old and new, according to Gullestad. The traditional notions of boundaries between, for instance, property have now been expanded to include the “personal space of individuals, to boundaries within and between homes, to national self-government as well as to other kinds of units, such as ethnic groups” (Gullestad, 1997, p.35). For her, it is not coincidental that one of the most internationally famous anthropology books from Norway is Barth (1998) *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*; Barth’s focus on boundaries was linked to his “cultural luggage”. Gullestad (1997, p.35) even argues that a major part of the ethnographic works that she and the others have produced about social life in Norway can be linked to boundaries. Hence, in a context where boundary setting is such a central principle in social life, it is not surprising that the right to privacy is widely recognized, personal space of individuals is extensively guarded, and others are given limited access to the self especially if those others are originally from a different country.

Table 1
Research Participants.

	Gender	Age	Civil Stat	Arrival Norway	Citizenship	Education	Occupation
M1	M	45	Married	2013	N	2-year college	Technician
M3	F	43	Married	2000	N, T	MS (UiO)	Sales Man.
M4	M	49	Divorced	2008	N	Left secondary	Auto Mech.
M5	M	63	Married	1985	N, T	MS (UiO)	Engineer
M6	F	52	Married	1988	N, T	Vocat. high-school	
M7	M	68	Married	1969	N, T	Vocat. high-school	Serbest
M8	F	39	Married	2014	T	MS (USA)	Legal degree
M9	F	39	Married	2015	T	MS (UiO)	Educ. Consult.
M10	F	46	Divorced	1999	N, T	High school	Sales
M11	F	55	Single	2018	T	MS (USA)	Head of NGO
M12	F	34	Single	2015	T	MS (Turkey)	Comp.engineer
M13	F	51	Married	1990	N	PhD (UiO)	Academic
M14	F	46	Single	2016	T	MS (USA)	Engineer
M15	M	67	Married	1976	N, T	PhD (UiO)	Engineer
M16	F	58	Married	1988	N	MS (Norway)	Economist
M17	F	36	Single	2017	T	PhD (Turkey)	Academic
M18	M	46	Married	1981	N, T	MS (UiO)	Senior engin
M19	F		Married		N, T		Child educ
M20	F	47	Married	2003	T	University (Turkey)	Chemist
M21	F	79	Widow	2002	N	University+pediat	Doctor(Turkey)
M22	M	44	Partner	1987	N, T	Grunnskole	small enter.
M23	F	44	Married	2016	T	University (Turkey)	Architect
M24	F	56	Married	1985	N, T	University(Turkey)	Teacher
M25	F	25	Married	2018	T	Vocat. high-school	Dj,Organizator
M26	F	29	Married	2018	T	University (Turkey)	Merc allocator
M27	F		Married	2018	T	PhD (Abu Dhabi)	Engineer
M28	M	27	Single	2019	T	2-year college (T)	Cook
M29	F	27	Married		N, T	University (N)	Teacher
M30	F	54	Divorced	1991	N, T	University (T&N)	Barne.teach
M31	F	34	Married	2006	N	Highschool(Turkey)	Health person.
M32	F	27	Single	2011	T	MS (UiO)	
M33	M	56	Married	1974	N, T	University (UiO)	Degree in soc.
M34	M	50	Married	1976	N, T	MS (Norway)	Engineer
M35	M	32	Single	2020	T, other	2-year college (T)	Media tech.
M36	F	50	Married	2004	N	University (Turkey)	Health person.
M37	F	55	Married	1991	N, T	Univ+pedag in N	Pedagog
M38	M	43	Married	2004	T	Vocat. high-school	Technician
M39	F	28	Married	2016	T	University (Turkey)	Degree in law
M40	M	34	Single	2019	T	PhD (Turkey)	Academic
M41	F	49	Married	2011	T	MS (Turkey)	Hum.res.man
M42	F	41	Married	2018	T	MS (Turkey)	Consult NGOs
M43	F	40	Single	1983	N,T	MS (Norway)	Teacher
M44	F	19	Single	2020	N,T	high school grad	
M45	F	52	Married	1972	N,T	Vocat. high-school	Insurance
M46	M	28	Married	2018	T	University (Turkey)	Engineer
M47	M	47	Married	1999	N,T	Second.school	
M48	M	41	Divorced	1988	N,T	Second.school	
M49	M	29	Single	2018	T	MS (Turkey)	Academic
M50	F	38	Married	2007	N	MS(Turkey+Nor)	Engineer
M51	F	47	Married	2005	N	University(Turkey)	Engineer
M52	M	43	Married	2018	T	MS (US)	Consultant
M53	F	33	Divorced	2012	T	Univer(Norway)	Accountant
M54	M	46	Divorced	1999	T,N	Highschool(Turkey)	at restraurant
M55	F	34	Married	2016	T,N	University(Turkey)	Teacher
M56	F	52	Divorced	1995	T,N	Vocat. high-school	Custom.Rep.
M57	F	50	Married	2017	T	MS (US)	Artist
M58	F	52	Married	1974 (when 7)	N	PhD (Norway)	Academic
M59	F	45	Married	1983 (when 6)	N,T	Second.school (N)	Worked in sales
M60	F	44	Married	2001	N	Vocat. high-school	
M61	F	30	Married	2019	T	University(Turkey)	Engineer
M62	M	25	Single	2019	T	University(Turkey)	
M63	F	37	Married	2015	N,T	MS (Turkey)	Degree in psyc
M64	F	43	Divorced	2003	N	2-year college(T)	Tourism
M65	F	36	Married	2019	T	University(Turkey)	Artist
M66	M	62	Divorced	1980	N	High school(T)	Driver
M67	M	41	Married	2016	T	High school(T)	Accounting-fin
M68	M	37	Married	2018	T	University(Turkey)	Police
M69	M	30	Single	2005	N	University(N)	Degree econ.

(continued on next page)

Table 1 (continued)

	Gender	Age	Civil Stat	Arrival Norway	Citizenship	Education	Occupation
M70	F	55	Married	1985	N,T	Highschool(T)	
M71	M	62	Partner	1988	N,T	High school	Writer
M72	M	57	Married	1987	N,T	High school	

Privacy and intimacy in the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey

Islamic notions of privacy are rooted in the early days of Islam and since then, Muslim scholars have agreed that households should have a space that is not accessible to outsiders. “In principle, all schools of Islamic law agreed that whatever was concealed within one’s home and was not seen, heard, or known to others was no one else’s business.” (Ayalon, 2011, p.515). In his article on window conflicts in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey, Sipahi (2016) talks about the Ottoman privacy regime as almost exclusively a visual relationship. He argues that, in the Ottoman Empire, the notion of privacy was not linked to individual morality or human agency. It was not connected to inner selves or conscious behaviors (Sipahi, 2016). “(T)he visual privacy regime organized the relationship of physical structures (buildings, windows at the buildings, etc.) in a city in order to avoid any legally and religiously harmful visual relation.” (p.590) Sipahi also discusses Murphey’s study of Ottomans where he argues that it will be futile to look for individual privacy as defined by European philosophy. The Ottoman privacy regime did not have space for privacy of information and focused especially on visual privacy (p.590). Sipahi observes that popular visual privacy rights still exist among the citizens in modern Turkey today.

Sehlikoglu (2015, p.77) focuses on the culture of *mahremiyet* (the Islamic notion of privacy and intimacy) in Turkey “not only as an institution of intimacy regulating everyday sexual relationships between individuals in public, but also as a system enabling the operation of social normalcies through the creation of boundaries and privileges”. She argues that intimacy is not restricted to love or coupling in the Turkish context, but it pertains to establishing boundaries and making them clear. She also discusses the multiple ways in which the concept of intimacy can be translated to Turkish:

An intimate bond between two people is described as *samimi*, which can be translated as ‘genuine’ or ‘sincere’... If a relationship becomes *samimi*, it means that it is purified from artificial manners, words and poses, and becomes unpretentious. Applied to a person, it describes one who is able to reveal his or her ‘true’ self. Barriers are lifted, exclusively and often temporarily, for one particular person. This act of lifting enables an intimate bond between and amongst those who are included, or ‘allowed in’, as those barriers remain for those who are excluded. There are several words used to refer to this moment of lifting, as an act of sincerity... Several of those words reflect an interiority, and direct contact with a sense of self. As in English, in Turkish intimacy is about boundaries, yet with its own particularities. *Samimi(yet)* [a state of candour or sincerity] needs to be mutual. Trespassing over one another’s boundaries without mutual agreement may make one *laubali* [unceremonious] to say the least: inappropriately informal, if not a violator or harasser. (Sehlikoglu, 2015, p.78–9).

The way Sehlikoglu describes Turkish notions of intimacy here is related to the control and regulation of personal boundaries. When a relationship is considered intimate, those boundaries are lifted, and individuals are expected to reveal their “true”, “authentic” selves to each other. However, the lifting of boundaries only happens with mutual agreement; they remain for those who are not ‘allowed in’. Although the discussion of privacy and intimacy in relation to boundary setting and lifting of boundaries is similar with respect to both the Norwegian and Turkish cases, as I will discuss below, my respondents think that those boundaries are easily lifted in friendships in the Turkish context, whereas they remain intact even after long periods of social interaction and relationship in Norway. Although some of them relate this distance in relationships to Norwegians’ will to avoid intimacy with migrants, most of them see non-relating as integral to social life in Norway. They perceive Turkey as a context where individuals relate to many others continuously in daily life, and where the barriers between individuals are more easily lifted to allow for genuine bonds.

Research

This article is based on the findings of the research project titled “Perceptions of Turkey-originated Migrants in Norway about Identity, Belonging, and Discrimination”. This is a qualitative research project where the aim is understanding how my respondents think about, perceive, and respond to their lived reality as migrants within society, rather than seeking to find causal or correlational relationships between variables. As my inquiry centers around my respondents’ life experiences as migrants and the meanings they attach to those experiences, a qualitative research approach makes it possible to explore the complexity, depth, and richness of their lived realities. In qualitative research, researcher’s observations can also be a source of data. As the project does not employ the measurement of quantifiable variables, it does not claim to be generalizable to other groups or populations.

For this project, I conducted 71 semi-structured interviews with Turkish migrants living in Norway (in/around Oslo and Drammen) after getting an ethics approval from NSD (Norwegian Center for Research Data) to conduct this research. I conducted these interviews between March 2019 and August 2020. I also became a member of several groups on Facebook, which have been established by Turkish migrants who are currently living in Norway. I attended a variety of social activities organized by these groups, like dinners, parties, seminars, etc., and had participant observation during these events.

I used various channels to recruit respondents to my interviews. I shared information about my research and invitation to participate in the research project on the Facebook groups of Turkish migrants in Norway. I additionally used my own networks to reach people who meet the criteria for my research, and I did snowball sampling: I asked my respondents to give names of people that I could interview. I conducted the interviews face-to-face at those places where my respondents chose before the Corona pandemic and

received their written informed consent. During the pandemic, I conducted the interviews online and my respondents gave oral consent, which was recorded. I conducted all the interviews myself in Turkish. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim, and the respondents were anonymized. Each respondent has been identified with the letter M and a number. Some of the demographic characteristics of my respondents are presented in Table 1. As shown in this table, they are between the ages of 25 and 79. 26 of them identified themselves as male, whereas 45 identified as female. In terms of marital status, 46 reported being married, 13 single, 9 divorced, 1 widow, and 2 as living with a partner. Their year of arrival to Norway ranged between 1969 and 2020: One person came during 1960 s, 5 during 1970 s, 14 during 1980 s, 7 during 1990 s, 12 during 2000 s, 28 during 2010 s, and two came in 2020 (two unreported). 28 of them have both Turkish and Norwegian citizenship; 9 have only Norwegian citizenship; 5 have Norwegian citizenship and Turkish blue card; 28 have only Turkish citizenship and residence permit in Norway, and one person has the citizenship of another European country in addition to Turkish citizenship. In terms of the highest level of education they completed: 5 left school before high-school graduation; 16 are graduates of high-school/vocational high-school; 4 have degrees from 2-year colleges; 18 have BS/BA degrees; 21 have Master's degrees, and 6 have PhDs (one unreported). Their occupations are in a variety of fields, as presented in the table.

I conducted semi-structured interviews and for the analysis of my interview data, I employed McCracken's (1988) five-step method and the method's interpretation by Piercy (2004). Accordingly, the first step of the analysis process involves reading and reviewing transcripts twice, writing notes in the margins. These notes are short expressions which aim to explain what the respondent is talking about in that section. At the second stage, these observations are changed into preliminary categories based on the transcripts, the literature review, and the theoretical frameworks (Piercy, 2004: 4). The third stage includes a thorough examination of the preliminary codes to see connections and to come up with pattern codes (ibid: 5). At the fourth stage, basic themes are determined by considering groups of comments by respondents (ibid: 6). Lastly, the dominant themes in the data are determined and explained (ibid: 6).

This article specifically focuses on the responses during interviews about differences in interpersonal communication in Norway and Turkey, and the implications of these differences in terms of the relationships' "depth". As I discussed before, most of the differences they mentioned and described in terms of interpersonal communication were related to different notions and degrees of privacy in these two country contexts and how these different notions of privacy are linked to different degrees and kinds of intimacy.

Several of my respondents expressed repeatedly their satisfaction with what I interpret as the social recognition of the right to privacy in the context of Norway. They think that Norwegians do not usually ask personal questions, and this brings more freedom in personal life. They observe that individuals do not want to disturb each other in daily life, and they respect each other's personal distance. M42, who has recently started living in Norway, stated that she is enjoying (for now) the fact that individuals do not make personal comments in Norway:

There are books for those who have recently moved to Norway. About Norwegian culture... We have read some of them. It is frequently stated that Norwegians are cold and reserved. There are statements like, in the rest of the world, you may be saying goodbye to your colleagues while leaving your workplace in the evening. In Norway, this might disturb the other person. It is normal not to talk if you do not have anything important to say. So I have started my life here with these in mind. However, in my case, I do not feel uncomfortable because of this difference. If you do not have anything important to say, do not talk. I am fine with that... When my son was a baby, I was carrying him in a baby bjorn in Turkey. Each time I was outside, somebody was commenting on it. Comments varying from "How interesting it is to carry your baby like this!" to "Are you sure that your baby will not suffocate in it?". I was tired of all such comments. Now, I am enjoying the fact that individuals are distant from each other here. They do not make personal comments. The social fatigue that I had is now being balanced by this social distance here. I have no complaints about it, for now. (M42).

Several of them also stated that they like not getting questions related to their romantic relationships, marital status, their decisions to have/not to have children, or other personal issues in Norway. These issues that they mentioned also give an idea about what boundaries my respondents have or try to have in their relationships: They especially want to keep the information related to their romantic lives and relationships, marriage, and family as private. The notion of visual privacy that Sipahi (2016) discussed as a major component of Ottoman privacy regime, for instance, is not mentioned as a crucial element of their boundary making or privacy. However, ironically, many of them also mentioned that not asking such personal questions creates barriers to establishing close relationships and leads to feelings of loneliness and isolation. According to them, this is in opposition to Turkey where people can establish warm, close, and deeper relationships. Therefore, while they appreciate Norwegian respect for right to privacy, they also see it as isolating and alienating:

According to what I have observed, people establish warmer relationships in Turkey. Also flexible, we can say... It is easier to talk about personal things. People can easily push the boundaries. This has positive and negative sides. I think even the interpersonal relationships between individuals are professional in Norway. This also has negative and positive sides. However, overall, I think they cannot be warm and friendly to each other. Due to this, you can feel very lonely after a while. (M69).

To give an example, in Turkey, you can spontaneously go to see your friend or your neighbor without making an appointment. But here in Oslo... I have a neighbor who is very old. She lives alone. She is retired and mostly has no engagements. When I ask her to have coffee together, she checks her calendar and says that she will be available two weeks later. They are very much living in their world. They do not try to open up by communicating with others. Even if it is a person that we barely know, we tell a lot about our lives. But with Norwegians, you can only talk about mundane, everyday things. (M63).

The worst thing about living here is this constant feeling of loneliness. Even when you have many relationships, there is no closeness, no warmth in them. You may have very respectful relationships with your colleagues at work. But it is not possible to say, "Let's go to my place after work!" to your colleagues, as we do in Turkey. There is no such spontaneous socializing. We cannot have the kind of social environment as the one we had in Turkey... The worst thing for me here is this loneliness. (M49).

Some of my respondents also talked about their hesitation before making comments and jokes or asking questions to others, being

worried that they might be considered too personal. Due to these concerns, they feel like they need to reflect a lot before saying anything:

In some groups, I keep very quiet. I try not to make jokes to anyone. My wife (Norwegian) does not laugh at my jokes. She is annoyed by them. We have a very different sense of humor compared to Norwegians. I am trying to be much more careful before saying anything. I now make fewer jokes even to my wife. (M46).

Some of my respondents narrated those incidents where they could not exactly decipher what went wrong in their interactions with some Norwegians. M35 talked about one such incident:

When I first came here, I had this Norwegian neighbor. I did not speak much Norwegian at the time, but we were doing our best to communicate. She was telling me that she could take care of my daughter whenever I needed it. After one visit to Turkey, I brought *tarhana* and made soup. To thank her for her help, I knocked on her door and gave her the soup. She responded quite weirdly. She stopped greeting me, she changed her way each time she saw me coming. She was a very unpredictable person. She was friendly when she drank wine. But other times, there was like a wall between her and the others. She was putting some of the old toys of her daughter in front of my door so that my daughter could play with them. But when I tried to thank her, she was looking in the other direction. She was a very strange woman! (M35).

While some of them interpreted the Norwegian distance in interpersonal relationships as a different way of relating to people, others interpreted it as a way of non-relating or even anti-relating to others. The presence of different expectations regarding the pace of relationships was also mentioned:

In Turkey, becoming friends happens automatically when you work with people. When you are in dialogue, if you do not have serious conflicts, you eventually become friends. Here, there is communication within work hours, but that communication is framed by work-related issues. After work hours, people go back home. There is no communication after work; that is not expected. In Turkey, when people talk, they give details about their lives and ask questions to learn details about your life. Here, people draw the boundaries of their lives for themselves and do not show any interest in your life. And they think of this as respectful. In this sense, it is the opposite of Turkey. **This is not a way of relating to people, it is non-relating or anti-relating.** By doing this, you cannot establish any real relationships. It is not technically possible to establish a relationship by being together but not sharing anything. I understand that if you repeat some actions together innumerable times, some common ground might be created. Like in *dugnad*, when you do cleaning together with other people, there might be some kind of dialogue. But for us, that is a very slow process of getting to know other people. That applies to Turkey and other Mediterranean countries. When we meet people from these countries, what we share in 20 min is sometimes more than what we share with Norwegians in three-four months. (M52).

Reflecting on the quotation above and the similar statements of my respondents in the light of Colman's (2014) arguments about non-relating and anti-relating that I discussed previously, we can argue that individuals who have been socialized in different cultural contexts can "tolerate relating others" to different degrees. While the Turkish respondents in this study seem to have very high levels of tolerance for relating and less need for non-relating, they portrayed the Norwegian individuals with whom they interact as having less tolerance for relating and more need for space and anti-relating. With these differences in expectations from relationships, we can also expect that both parties of these interactions may opt for anti-relating.

M68 talks about the very-slow pace of getting to know people in Norway. She thinks that it takes a long time and a lot of effort to gain the trust of the Norwegian people. But once you come to that stage and gain their trust, she thinks they become dependable long-term, reliable friends:

What I have liked about interactions with Norwegians is the way they have approached me after I could gain their trust. If they believe in your sincerity and see that you do not try to establish an interest-based relationship, they open all their doors to you. They do not play tricks. They tell you directly whatever they think. This only happens if they accept you. But this takes a very long time. They are reserved people. It is not easy to overcome that. You need to be in constant communication and interaction. But if you get that acceptance, it turns into a great relationship. (M68).

In a different way from the previous respondent, some of them think that Norwegian and Turkish cultures are simply too different from each other and relationships with Norwegians can never go beyond a certain level:

I have some Norwegian friends. But in the cultural sense, we are very different. It is almost impossible to go to the next level in relationships. What we understand from a conversation is very different from what they understand. What they laugh at, I do not find funny. Relationships do not move forward. (M64).

In addition to the slow pace of establishing relationships and friendships, many of them also complain about programmed and scheduled interactions that do not have any spontaneity and also how relationships constantly move forward and then back. They state that in Norway, they cannot find the depth and closeness in relationships that they had in Turkey:

The way we socialize here... Everybody is bound to their calendars. We socialize during weekends. Nothing on the weekdays, nothing spontaneous... In Turkey, I was with my friends almost 24/7. Having breakfast together, having afternoon tea, beer in the evening, raki at night, and soup afterward... Here, it is only on Saturdays. With the Norwegian friends, we have our drinks at someone's place first, and we talk. We go out around 23.00. We go to a bar or a club. This is how we are socializing. We are, what we can say, close friends. But what happens is, at the end of each night, we get close. But the next week, we start from the very beginning. The same distance as if we haven't had those experiences the previous week... Norwegians are, in general, very respectful and modest people. There is no problem there. But here, I can never have as warm and close relationships as I used to have in Turkey. Honestly, my mind is always there. I miss them a lot. I go to Turkey every chance that I get, at least four-five times a year. (M46).

According to their perception, family relationships in Norway are also too distant and reserved:

Here, there is the notion of standing on your own feet. For us, even if she turns 50, my daughter is still my child. We keep protecting them whether they are 3 or 50. In Norway, they are under the protection of their families until 18, but after 18, they are free

individuals... My children are 25 and 21 now. As long as they want to live with me, I will take care of them. When Norwegians hear about it, they criticize it. They say, are they still living with you?... This person says he has not seen his brother for 30 years, although they live 5–6 kilometers apart... They also confess this themselves sometimes. There was this woman who said, you are friendly people. You call each other, visit each other frequently, and have picnics and barbecues. You get together in large numbers. We don't have these, she said. A son may not see his parents for years... (M72).

Those of them who have lived in Norway for long periods feel that they have also changed in terms of how they interact with other people. They observe that they have also become more distant in their relationships with others. They especially observe this when they visit Turkey and interact with people there:

I don't know, maybe I have become like this due to living here all this time. In my relationships in Turkey, I now feel the need to put some distance from others. Although I am not from Norway, I guess I have gotten used to the norms here. I have lost my warmth, my friendliness. I observe that people in Turkey relate to each other very warmly. They get on a ferry or a bus, and immediately start having conversations with others. I am not capable of doing that anymore... Although I am also Turkish... Norwegians are distant. Always... For instance, in Turkey, we ask questions to each other when we are interacting. Here, you cannot do that. (M70).

While they generally think that Norwegians are distant and reserved in interpersonal relationships, some of them also believe that they are even more distant in their relationships with non-Norwegians:

They put this distance. They do not try to have a conversation or communicate. You say a couple of sentences, and then they depart. Nobody has asked questions like where in Turkey I came from, or what I used to do. No such questions... So there is always this distance, the distance they put between themselves and foreigners. (M35).

M66 has lived in Norway for over 40 years and he makes comparisons between how Norwegians approached "foreigners" in the past and how they do today:

Norwegians did not use to lie 40 years before. They did not know how to lie. They were open and peaceful people. They did not use to fight. But they have changed a lot. There is an incredible change at the top. They now have a more nationalistic way of thinking. Their attitude to foreigners has changed. I am talking about the state, the state apparatus... It has become very obvious. There is now fear of and suspicion towards foreigners. Now I see it everywhere. Even in the attitudes of my old friends... Their distant attitudes to foreigners... (M66).

Although my respondents expressed their satisfaction with the fact that they are not asked many personal questions, some of them mentioned getting several comments and questions related to religion. Being originally from Turkey, a Muslim-majority country, they stated that they are usually assumed to be religious, practicing Muslims and receive several comments about what this indicates to Norwegians. In another paper, I discussed how Turkish women are being religified in the context of Norway, where an assumed religious identity is assigned to them based on their nationality/ethnicity and that ascribes religious identity is considered more important and defining than all other dimensions of their identities. Additionally, having the idea that Norwegians do not ask questions related to religion to each other considering it in the realm of privacy, my respondents think that religious questions asked to them indicate disrespect to them in social relationships. In other words, they think that these private questions are asked only to them (migrants from Muslim-majority countries) because they are not considered social equals. Therefore, they believe, certain aspects of one's privacy may be violated if the person is a migrant with a certain nationality/ethnicity or an assumed religious affiliation.

According to my respondents, the suspicion towards and fear of foreigners also goes together with Norwegian people's preference to interact and work with people who are very similar to them. Some of my respondents interpreted this attitude as avoiding what they consider as risky:

They prefer culturally similar people both as friends and colleagues. They feel better and more comfortable when they interact with others who are similar. For Norwegians, it is important to feel comfortable. They do not want to be open. Openness means embracing the unknown and that is a risky thing. They do not want it. (M59).

Conclusion

Based on the findings of 71 semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted with Turkey-originated migrants who live in Norway, this article has discussed whether and what kinds of differences Turkish migrants living in Norway perceive in the notions of privacy and intimacy between the Turkish and Norwegian contexts, and the consequences of this perceived difference for their social interactions in Norway. On the one hand, many of my respondents value the social recognition of the right to privacy in the context of Norway. They think that Norwegians do not usually ask personal questions, and this brings more freedom in personal life. They observe that individuals do not want to disturb each other in daily life, and they respect each other's personal distance. For them, this contrasts with Turkey, where even strangers can easily ask personal questions or make comments that violate others' privacy. Although they appreciate the freedom that the recognition of privacy brings in Norway, they also think that avoidance of asking personal questions creates barriers in establishing close relationships and intimacy. They feel that this aspect also contrasts with Turkey where people can easily establish warm, close, and deeper relationships. Some of my respondents understood the Norwegian distance in interpersonal relationships as a different way of relating to people. However, many others thought of it as a way of non-relating or even anti-relating to other individuals. Considering [Colman's \(2014\)](#) arguments about non-relating and anti-relating, individuals who have been socialized in different cultural contexts seem to "tolerate relating others" at different degrees. While the Turkish respondents in this study described themselves as having higher levels of tolerance to relating and less need for non-relating, they portrayed the Norwegian individuals with whom they interact as having less tolerance for relating and more need for space. With these differences in expectations from relationships, we can also expect that both parties of these interactions may opt for anti-relating. According to my respondents, there is also a significant difference in the pace of establishing relationships in Turkey and Norway. They repeatedly

mentioned the very-slow pace of getting to know people in Norway. They think that it takes a long time and a lot of effort to gain the trust of Norwegian people. Several of them also complained about programmed and scheduled interactions that do not have any spontaneity and how relationships constantly move forward and then back in Norway.

Additionally, they think that although they are not asked many personal questions, they can get comments and questions related to religion. Being originally from Turkey, a Muslim-majority country, they stated that they are usually assumed to be religious, practicing Muslims and receive several comments about what this indicates to Norwegians. As Norwegians do not ask religious questions to each other as it is considered a private issue, my respondents think that religious questions that they receive show disrespect to them in social relationships. They believe that these private questions are asked only to them (migrants from Muslim-majority countries) because they are not considered social equals. Therefore, they feel that certain aspects of one's privacy may be violated if the person is a migrant with a certain nationality/ethnicity or an assumed religious affiliation.

Although several of my respondents think that Norwegians are distant in their social interactions in general, there are also those who believe that Norwegians are more distant and reserved in their interactions with non-Norwegians. They think that the suspicion towards and fear of foreigners goes together with Norwegian people's preference to interact with people who are very similar to them. This observation is in line with Gullestad's (2002) argument that as a consequence of the interaction style which emphasizes sameness, social actors in Norway consider it a problem when others are perceived as "too different". As "immigrants" are considered "too different" and the differences between Norwegians and them are deemed significant, these differences seem to be masked by avoiding or not establishing intimacy with them.

Going back to the paragraph by Kaleb (2002) that I quoted at the beginning, the democratic openness and sociability that Kaleb is mentioning in that paragraph are the aspects of an ideal democratic culture. As in all ideals, they can be considered as the standards for perfection or the ultimate objectives. In the way Kaleb (2002, p.288) put it, the ideal democratic culture that we should strive to achieve would involve "easy contact with strangers ... (as) a sign of immediate acceptance of another human being on experientially equal terms" where "lines of class, ethnicity, color, and religion are crossed with such frequency and rapidity that they grow fainter and, in the long run, somewhat less important." Such ideals are becoming less frequently mentioned and easily forgotten in democracies of today. Easy contact not only with fellow citizens, but also with strangers as a component of an ideal democratic culture is rarely emphasized. This ideal does not necessitate the annulment of the right to privacy. As mentioned previously, privacy is the right to keep certain information hidden from others but also having the power to waive that right. Intimacy is the relationship that arises when someone waives that right. In addition to the different culturally induced norms and expectations regarding the extent or amount of self-disclosure, in an environment where individuals choose to waive that right only for those who are culturally similar to them, there will be few possibilities for establishing intimacy outside "one's own group". According to the accounts of my research participants, the Norwegian interaction style that emphasizes sameness seems to make it challenging to establish intimacy between Norwegians and migrants.

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