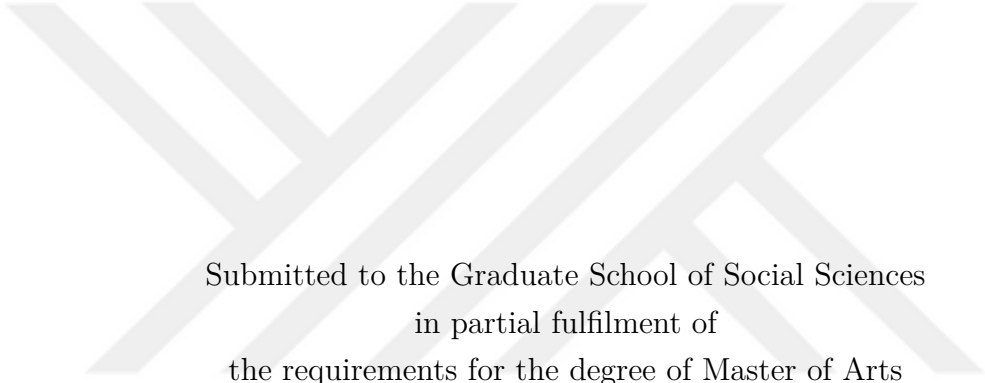


**IMAGINED CONTACT AMONG MINORITY GROUP MEMBERS: A  
COMPARISON OF MAJORITY AND INTERMINORITY CONTACT**

by  
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Submitted to the Graduate School of Social Sciences  
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CONTACT**

Approved by:



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## ABSTRACT

### IMAGINED CONTACT AMONG MINORITY GROUP MEMBERS: A COMPARISON OF MAJORITY AND INTERMINORITY CONTACT

AFİFE SERRA TÜMER

Conflict Analysis and Resolution M.A. THESIS, JULY 2021

Thesis Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Sabahat Çiğdem Bağcı

Keywords: imagined contact, intergroup contact, Kurds, Syrians, interminority

Imagined contact literature is vast, yet research focusing on minority status group members is scarce, while interminority imagined contact research does not exist. This research investigated Kurdish participants' imagined contact with Turkish majority and Syrian minority groups in Turkey. Study I, surveying 108 self-identified Kurds (50 females, 58 males;  $M$  age = 26.46,  $SD$  age = 7.60) examined imagined contact effects on ingroup identification, outgroup attitudes, relative deprivation, and perceived discrimination. Contact had a significant effect on ingroup identification and only an approached significant effect on attitudes. Accordingly, interminority contact (but not contact with the majority) increased ingroup identification and seemed to lead to improved outgroup attitudes towards Syrians. For Study II, which was a qualitative study, 10 self-identified Kurds (8 females, 2 males) were interviewed. Qualitative analyses revealed differences between residents of Eastern and Western cities with regard to the same dependent variables. Kurds from the East reported higher ingroup identification, relative deprivation, and perceived discrimination, especially after imagining contact with the Turkish outgroup. Empathy towards Syrians and getting accepted by Turks have become the prevailing themes in Study II. Results of two studies were evaluated comparatively. Limitations and future research prospects were discussed.

## ÖZET

### AZINLIK GRUBU ÜYELERİ ARASINDA HAYALİ TEMAS: ÇOĞUNLUK VE AZINLIKLAR ARASI TEMASIN KARŞILAŞTIRILMASI

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UYUŞMAZLIK ANALİZİ VE ÇÖZÜMÜ YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ, TEMMUZ  
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Anahtar Kelimeler: hayali temas, gruplararası temas, Kürtler, Suriyeliler,  
azınlıklar arası

Hayali (kurgusal) temas literatürü çok geniş olmakla birlikte azınlık statüsündeki-grup üyelerine odaklanan araştırmalar azdır ve azınlıklar arası hayal edilen temas araştırması hiç bulunmamaktadır. Bu araştırma, Kürt katılımcıların Türkiye'deki Türk çoğunluk ve Suriyeli azınlık dış gruplarla hayali temaslarını araştırmış ve bu amaçla iki çalışma yapılmıştır. Kendisini Kürt olarak tanımlayan 108 katılımcıyla (50 kadın, 58 erkek; Ort.yaş = 26.46, S = 7.60) anket gerçekleştiren Çalışma I, grup içi özdeşleşme, dış grup tutumları, göreceli yoksunluk ve algılanan ayrımcılık üzerindeki hayali temas etkisini incelemiştir. Temasın, grup içi özdeşleşme üzerinde önemli bir etkiye sahip olduğu ve tutumlar üzerindeki etkisinin de istatistiksel olarak önemli bir etkiye yaklaştığı bulunmuştur. Buna göre, sadece azınlıklar arası temas, iç grupla özdeşleşmeyi artırmış ve ilgili azınlık dış gruba yönelik dış grup tutumlarının iyileşmesini sağlamıştır. Nitel bir çalışma olan Çalışma II için, kendisini Kürt olarak tanımlayan 10 katılımcı (8 kadın, 2 erkek) ile mülakatlar gerçekleştirilmiştir. Nitel analiz, aynı bağımlı değişkenler açısından doğu ve batı illerinde yaşayanlar arasındaki farklılıkları ortaya çıkarmıştır. Doğuda yaşayan Kürtlerin, özellikle Türklerle temas kurduklarını hayal ettikten sonra, iç grupla özdeşleşmeleri, göreceli yoksunlukları ve algılanan ayrımcılıklarının arttığı görülmüştür. Suriyelilere yönelik empati ve Türkler tarafından kabul görme, Çalışma II'nin hakim temaları olmuştur. İki çalışmanın sonuçları karşılaştırmalı olarak değerlendirilmiş ve yapılan çalışmanın limitleri ile gelecekte yapılacak araştırmalar için olası yol haritaları tartışılmıştır.

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*anneme ve babama*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Globalization and advancements in technology have introduced new phenomena to our world for the last century. Above all, we have more connected and mobile lives than ever. While the World Wide Web allows us to know about anything that happens on the other side of the globe instantly; travel across countries is fast and easy as never before. As it is easy to access knowledge, unknown lands are not scary anymore; rather, foreign countries give hope to people who are not happy with where they live. With the advancements in transportation, people have less to worry about when they decide to move to another country, as well. Unstable social, political, and economic environments in less developed countries encourage, sometimes, even force people to leave where they were born and migrate to a foreign country to seek a better job, a better life, and a brighter future (Davin 1999; Hagen-Zanker and Jessica 2008; Segal 2019). Results of this trend includes heterogeneous societies with increased numbers of migrants and refugees who ended up constituting the minority group in their new countries. According to the United Nations' 2020 Migration Report, the approximate number of immigrants around the world has reached 281 million (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division 2020). It means that 281 million people are constituting a minority group somewhere around the world. The presence of a minority group, be it newly immigrated or already existing, challenges the prevailing political, economic, and social dynamics of the society. Therefore, migration bears multidimensional consequences, affecting both the host and the migrated groups (Berry 2001, 1997; Kymlicka 2010).

The way of the governments handling the diversity of the country has repercussions for both minorities to position themselves within the society and for the majority to develop an attitude towards the minority. Multiculturalism and assimilation are two ends of possible approaches towards the diversity by the state; discrimination and inclusion are two approaches towards the minorities by the majority; and integration and segregation are two possible stands for minorities towards the society (Berry 2011; Bloemraad, Korteweg, and Yurdakul 2008;

Borooah and Mangan 2009; Cattle 2012; Entzinger 2006). For instance, a combination of multiculturalism-discrimination-segregation may result in hostility while assimilation-inclusion-integration may result in harmony (e.g., Green and Staerklé 2013). While various acculturation strategies are possible, and each has different outcomes, which strategy leads to the best adaptation depends on a variety of macro-level and micro-level factors (e.g., Bornstein 2017). What is critical is to keep the harmony between groups. Social science researchers have investigated the roots and ways of reducing intergroup conflicts for decades (e.g., Allport 1954; Billig 1976; Dixon, Tropp, Durrheim, and Tredoux 2010; Paolini et al. 2006; Pettigrew 1991, 1998; Sherif et al. 1961; Tajfel and Turner 1979). Among numerous theories coined by several researchers in order to improve intergroup relationships, Intergroup Contact Theory, which suggests that prejudice can be reduced among hostile groups through contact, stands as one of the most conspicuous ones (e.g., Al Ramiah and Hewstone 2013; Allport 1954; Bagci and Turnuklu 2019; Bagci, Piyale, and Ebcim 2018; Crisp and Turner 2009; Pettigrew 1998; Pettigrew et al. 2011).

This study focuses on imagined contact, one of the intergroup contact types, that is developed especially for groups that are difficult to come together in real life (e.g., Husnu and Crisp 2010*b*) or for minority/disadvantaged groups whose daily contact with the majority group usually occurs in a negative context (e.g., Bagci, Piyale, and Ebcim 2018). In this study, Kurds were asked to imagine a positive encounter with a Turkish majority group member and/or a Syrian refugee in Turkey. The effects of imagined contact on the relevant intergroup processes such as ingroup identification, outgroup attitudes, relative deprivation, and perceived discrimination were analyzed. Study I investigated comparatively two imagined contact scenarios whereby minority Kurds either contacted an unknown Turkish or Syrian person, whereas Study II involved a qualitative imagined contact study where the same contact scenarios were examined through qualitative research methods.

## 1.1 Intergroup Contact Theory

Contact Hypothesis was introduced by Gordon W. Allport in 1954 arguing that under certain conditions prejudice between hostile groups can be reduced, and intergroup harmony can be assured through contact between group members. The four conditions suggested by Allport are as follows: equal status during the contact, intergroup cooperation, common goals, and support from the authority (All-

port 1954). After Allport, much research supported the contact hypothesis and developed it into a theory. Pettigrew's (1998) study is of a crucial importance for intergroup contact research. Referring to friendship, he argued that learning about the outgroup, changing behavior, generating affective ties and ingroup reappraisal are four processes that make contact effective. Pettigrew's prominent work focuses on the processes rather than the four conditions that are, according to him, more facilitating than essential. Contributing to the theory and how it works, Pettigrew suggested taking individual differences and societal norms into consideration for the expected contact effects and pointed out to the possibility of prejudiced people avoidance of contacting with the outgroup or the complete lack of contact among groups that suffer protracted conflict (Pettigrew 1998).

The most persuasive research demonstrating contact to actually reduce prejudice was a meta-analysis by Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) that examined 515 studies including 713 samples. Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) showed that intergroup contact is associated with less prejudice that goes beyond the contacted person and involves the contacted person's group as a whole. Supporting Pettigrew's (1998) view, the research revealed that Allport's conditions are not essential for prejudice reduction, yet they increase the positive outcomes and facilitate contact. Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) also showed that various factors such as group status, target group and contact setting moderates the effects of contact (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). Later research, pointing out to the limitation that the meta-analysis included studies mostly conducted in benign settings, focused on intergroup contact in conflict or post-conflict settings and suggested that intergroup contact was even more effective in contexts of intergroup conflict (e.g., Al Ramiah and Hewstone 2013; Bagci and Turnuklu 2019; Cameron and Rutland 2006; Čehajić and Brown 2010; Hewstone et al. 2014; Stathi, Husnu, and Pendleton 2017).

For example, in two studies conducted in the post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina, intergroup contact predicted positive outcomes (Čehajić and Brown 2010; Čehajić, Brown, and Castano 2008). Bosnian Muslims who had positive contact with Bosnian Serbs stated readiness for forgiveness and showed less desire for social distancing (Čehajić, Brown, and Castano 2008). Bosnian Serb adolescents who engaged in contact with the Muslim outgroup were ready to accept more ingroup responsibility for the atrocities during the Bosnian war of 1992-1995 (Čehajić and Brown 2010). In Northern Ireland, where a protracted conflict exists between Catholics and Protestants, contact leads to improved attitudes toward mixing with the outgroup and it is associated with forgiveness and outgroup trust (Hewstone et al. 2006). Stathi, Husnu, and Pendleton (2017) found an association between positive contact and forgiveness in Cyprus as well. Turkish Cypriots' contact with Greek

Cypriots decreased intergroup anxiety and dehumanization of the outgroup leading to increased forgiveness (Stathi, Husnu, and Pendleton 2017).

Recent research has also concentrated on the Turkish-Kurdish intergroup conflict setting. For example, Bagci and Çelebi (2018) demonstrated that cross-group friendships were associated with more positive outgroup attitudes among both group members, especially when perceived conflict was lower (Bagci and Çelebi 2018). Bagci and Turnuklu's (2019) study with Turks and Kurds examined direct positive and negative intergroup contact. Turks' positive contact with Kurds is found to be associated with positive outgroup attitudes and higher levels of psychological well-being while the negative contact is associated with negative outgroup attitudes and lower levels of psychological well-being. On the other hand, Kurds' positive contact with Turks led to lower levels of relative deprivation and perceived discrimination. Positive contact also improved outgroup attitudes and the psychological well-being of Kurds (Bagci and Turnuklu 2019). These findings suggest that intergroup contact may be an effective tool to reduce prejudice even in intergroup conflict settings.

### **1.1.1 Forms of Indirect Contact**

While classic contact research is focused on direct, face-to-face contact, various forms of indirect contact have been studied over the last two decades. Indirect contact has both advantages and disadvantages compared to direct contact, but in many cases it stands as an effective intervention that may replace direct contact (White et al. 2021). Extended, vicarious, virtual and imagined contact are four types of contact that the contemporary research has focused on (Dovidio et al. 2017).

Extended contact was first introduced by Wright et al. (1997). It proposed that knowing an ingroup member who is friends with an outgroup member is enough for one to develop positive attitudes towards the outgroup. Wright et al. (1997) conducted an experiment with undergraduate psychology students where they created two competing groups. After ensuring a hostile environment among the groups, randomly selected students from each group were separated from their groups and were paired with a student from the other group for a friendship-building session. After the selected students reunited with their groups and talked about the experience with the out-group member, the groups' overall attitudes toward the outgroup became more positive than earlier in the experiment and the intergroup bias was reduced (Wright et al. 1997). In another research conducted by Cameron and Rutland (2006), researchers revealed that 5-10 years old non-disabled children showed more

positive attitudes toward the disabled after they were told stories about disabled and non-disabled people in a friendship context once a week for six weeks (Cameron and Rutland 2006).

Vicarious contact incorporates extended contact and social cognitive theory. According to social cognitive theory, one learns about new behaviors not only by trial and error, but also by observing others' actions and consequences of those actions (Bandura 1986). Vicarious contact involves an ingroup role model or sometimes a televised character (Schiappa, Gregg, and Hewes 2005) and was shown to lead to positive intergroup outcomes (e.g., Mazziotta, Mummendey, and Wright 2011).

Virtual contact includes the use of internet for groups that are difficult to come together for a real contact situation. White, Abu-Rayya, and Weitzel (2014) conducted an experiment with Muslim and Christian high school students in Sydney. During their contact via internet, they were given interreligious information and discussed how to work together on environmental issues. For instance, they talked about how Muslims and Christians can save energy while going to the mosque for Friday prayer and to church service on Sundays. Virtual contact sessions were held for nine weeks. When measured after two weeks, six months and twelve months of the intervention, students showed less intergroup bias (White, Abu-Rayya, and Weitzel 2014).

### **1.1.2 Imagined Contact**

Imagined contact is another form of indirect contact of which effects are parallel to direct contact (Miles and Crisp 2014) and which, unlike extended or vicarious contact, involves the self. Imagined contact was developed on the basis that imagining a situation evokes similar responses and use much of the same neural substrates in the brain with the real experience (Dadds et al. 1997; Kosslyn, Ganis, and Thompson 2001). For instance, in a study about bystander apathy<sup>1</sup>, subjects imagining a crowded meal showed less willingness to help the experimenter with a second study than subjects imagining a meal with only one person. Garcia et al. (2002) argued that imagining the social context helps to activate abstract concepts, in this case it was the feeling of being lost in the crowd (Garcia et al. 2002). Following the idea, Turner, Crisp, and Lambert (2007) proposed that imagining a positive con-

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<sup>1</sup>Bystander apathy is the name of a social situation where people are less likely to step forward to help someone in need/asking for help with something when other people are present.

tact with the outgroup should activate the same feelings with a successful direct contact. With three experiments, they demonstrated that by simply asking participants (young or heterosexual men) to imagine meeting with an outgroup member (elderly or homosexual), intergroup bias and intergroup anxiety can be reduced and better outgroup attitudes can be developed. In the first and second experiments, the youth who imagined an interaction with a stranger elderly showed less intergroup bias and more willingness for future encounters with an outgroup member than those in the control group, imagining an outdoor scene or only thinking about an elderly. In the third experiment, heterosexual men imagining an interaction with a gay man showed improved outgroup attitudes and less intergroup anxiety (Turner, Crisp, and Lambert 2007). Later research has provided strong empirical evidence that imagined contact is an effective procedure to improve intergroup relationships (Miles and Crisp 2014).

Stathi and Crisp's (2008) study revealed that imagining a positive contact situation with the outgroup leads people to project positive self-traits to the outgroup member Stathi and Crisp (2008). Experiments conducted by West, Hotchin, and Wood (2017) demonstrated that imagined contact affected the participants with higher initial prejudice more and led them to show better attitudes toward the homeless people (West, Hotchin, and Wood 2017). Imagined contact improved high ingroup identifier Turks' attitudes toward Kurds and decreased the perceived threat in a study by Bagci, Piyale, and Ebcim (2018). Birtel et al. (2019) conducted a research with the participation of preschool children. The results showed that imagined contact reduced intergroup bias in allocating resources and led to more behavioral inclusiveness (Birtel et al. 2019).

Miles and Crisp (2014), in their meta-analytic study that includes 71 research, indicated that imagined contact is effective in reducing intergroup bias with regard to attitudes, emotions, intentions, and behavior (mean effect size of Cohen's  $d = .35$ ). Last but not least, a preregistered study by Schuhl, Lambert, and Chatard (2019) revealed that imagined contact improved attitudes towards people diagnosed with schizophrenia and reduced the intergroup anxiety on the thought of meeting a person from this group. What is more important that Schuhl et al. showed that a single-session of imagined contact has long-term effects lasting 2-3 weeks at least (Schuhl, Lambert, and Chatard 2019).

Imagined contact effect is found to be mediated by outgroup trust (Turner, West, and Christie 2013), attitudes (Birtel et al. 2019; Turner, West, and Christie 2013; West, Husnu, and Lipps 2015), intergroup anxiety (Turner, West, and Christie 2013; Vezzali et al. 2015), perspective taking (Husnu and Crisp 2015) and decreased nega-

tive mood (Husnu and Paolini 2019). Research also revealed that imagined contact effect is moderated by initial prejudice levels (West, Hotchin, and Wood 2017), ingroup identification (Bagci, Piyale, and Ebcim 2018; Stathi and Crisp 2008), prior contact (Lau, Lau, and Loper 2014) and the scenario that is more detailed (Husnu and Crisp 2010*a*), highlighting similarities and differences (Stathi, Crisp, and Hogg 2011), or that puts forward a friendship potential (Bagci et al. 2018).

As ample research has shown, intergroup contact and particularly imagined contact are powerful means of reducing stereotyping, outgroup prejudice, ingroup bias and intergroup anxiety, and developing positive intergroup attitudes and more willingness for future contact (Bagci, Piyale, and Ebcim 2018; Birtel et al. 2019; Husnu and Crisp 2010*b*; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006; Stathi and Crisp 2008; Stringer et al. 2009). Imagined contact is not only a successful technique for improving intergroup relations, but also a practical strategy when direct contact is not a viable option (Husnu and Crisp 2010*b*; Stathi et al. 2020) or when direct contact is often negative in societies where protracted conflict structures intergroup relations (Bagci, Piyale, and Ebcim 2018). However, most research has investigated imagined contact effects on majorities rather than on minorities, potentially because previous research examining the minorities' intergroup contact with the majority showed that the effect of contact is rather weak among this group (Stathi and Crisp 2008; Tropp and Pettigrew 2005). Below, the contact effect among minorities with the majority and the other minority groups are discussed.

## **1.2 Contact Effects among Minorities and Interminority Contact**

The effect of intergroup contact among minorities is a long-discussed topic among researchers. Research demonstrated that imagined contact, as well as direct contact, is less effective among minority status groups. Tropp and Pettigrew (2005), in their meta-analysis of direct contact research, showed that minority-majority status affects the efficacy of the contact in reducing intergroup prejudice. Accordingly, contact is less effective in changing attitudes among minority group members compared to majority group members (Tropp and Pettigrew 2005). Stathi and Crisp (2008) revealed that while majority group members imagining a contact experience with the minority group members projected more positive self-traits to the minority, the minority group members did not show such positive projection following the imagined contact (Stathi and Crisp 2008).

Research investigating minority contact puts forward possible reasons why minorities are less affected by contact compared to majorities. Barlow et al. (2013) explains this situation with the “wallpaper effect.” Accordingly, minority status group members engage in contact with the majority group more often, sometimes even on daily basis which leads them to be more immune to contact effects (Barlow et al. 2013). Intergroup attitudes of minorities are strongly linked with their perceived prejudice from the majority outgroup (Monteith and Spicer 2000). Minorities are more susceptible to prejudice where negative intergroup attitudes can be provoked easily in minorities after experiencing prejudice from a minority member (Tropp 2003). They also experience more intergroup anxiety and perceive more discrimination (Pinel 2002). Therefore, according to Tropp and Pettigrew (2005), minorities’ perception of the ingroup’s devaluation in the eyes of the majority outgroup decreases contact’s positive outcomes (Tropp and Pettigrew 2005).

Although the effect is weak, few imagined contact studies focusing on the minority’s contact with the majority have found positive outcomes with regard to intergroup relations. An experiment conducted by Vezzali et al. (2015) showed that international students in Italy evaluated the majority outgroup more positively and reported greater self-disclosure after imagining a positive contact with the native Italians compared to international students who are in control condition (Vezzali et al. 2015). In a study by Bagci, Stathi, and Piyale (2018), Eastern Europeans in the United Kingdom demonstrated less outgroup prejudice and higher social acceptance after imagining a positive contact with the British, whereas Kurds in Turkey showed lower levels of social acceptance when imagining contact with the Turks (Bagci, Stathi, and Piyale 2019a). Another research examining Kurds’ contact with Turks revealed that imagined contact decreases perceived discrimination and intergroup anxiety; however it does not affect outgroup attitudes (Bagci, Piyale, and Ebcim 2018).

Imagined contact studies focusing on minority-majority relations demonstrate contradictory results. Interminority contact studies, on the other hand, indicates more consistent results showing that contact can generate positive outcomes. An interminority contact study conducted in Malaysia with Chinese and Indian minorities revealed that interminority positive contact leads to lower levels of realistic and symbolic threats, less intergroup anxiety and more positive outgroup evaluations (Al Ramiah et al. 2014). Another study examining interethnic attitudes in Netherlands showed that interminority contact reduced social distance toward the contacted ethnic minority. Turks and Moroccans contacting with the Surinamese demonstrated less social distance towards them (Hindriks, Coenders, and Verkuyten 2011). On the other hand, Bikmen’s (2011) study with Asian and Black students in the United

States revealed differing results. Although Blacks' outgroup attitudes was not associated with contact with the Asians, Asians' contact with the Blacks improved their outgroup attitude (Bikmen 2011).

Considering the fact that societies consist of more than one or two ethnic groups and social harmony is not established only through a healthy majority-minority relation, but also through decent interminority interaction (Brylka, Jasinskaja-Lahti, and Mähönen 2016), hence studying interminority contact is of crucial importance. Providing better interminority relations can have applied implications in building solidarity against the majority and improvement of minority rights. Yet, interminority contact studies share a smaller pie among the contact studies. Interminority imagined contact, which could be utilized in more segregated and ghettoed societies, is not studied as far as I know.

In order to fill the gap in the interminority imagined contact literature, this study focuses on Kurdish minorities'<sup>2</sup> relations with the majority Turks as well as the Syrian refugees in Turkey. For this purpose, two studies (a survey and interviews) were conducted with self-identified Kurds, measuring ingroup identification, outgroup attitudes, perceived discrimination, and relative deprivation after imagining contact with the majority and the minority situations.

### **1.3 The Context: Kurds in Turkey**

Kurds, constituting 16-19% of Turkey's total population (KONDA 2011) have been a disadvantaged ethnic group who are not recognized officially as a minority group. Nation-state building process of Turkey by the founding political elite and several nationalist-religious rebellions by Kurds in the early years of the republic resulted in various measures including the ban of Kurdish language and internal displacements of Kurds (Azak 2010; Cagaptay 2007; Çelik 2012). Especially until 2000s, Kurds were embraced as citizens only if they leave their ethnic heritage, assimilated into Turkish culture and speak Turkish language (Yeğen 2010). The armed struggle between Turkish military with the separatist Kurdish party in 1980s and onwards escalated the conflict further, costing several lives from each side.

Turkish state's measures against its Kurdish subjects and armed conflict, even

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<sup>2</sup>In this dissertation, the term minority is used in 'populational' sense, not as official status since neither Kurds nor Syrian refugees are considered as minority officially.

though it has been kept limited mostly in rural areas of Eastern Anatolia, have had repercussions in the society. As the severity of armed conflict increased, the tension between Turks and Kurds deepened as well. Although several steps were taken by the state to ease the way for Kurds to enjoy their cultural life and rights to some extent (TRT-Turkey's state-owned television starting an all-Kurdish TV channel, opening Kurdish Language departments in a few public universities, allowing Kurdish in public space, courts and official signs, adding the letters q, w, and x used in Kurdish to the Turkish alphabet taught at schools etc.), these steps did not achieve full reconciliation between the two communities at the state level.

The characteristics of the relationship between Turks and Kurds can be defined by othering, perceived threat (Çelik, Bilali, and Iqbal 2017), mistrust (KONDA 2015) and unfavorable attitudes (Dixon and Ergin 2010). Accordingly, Kurds are the most othered group in Turkey, unfavorable attitudes towards Kurds are higher than towards any other group in Turkey, and mistrust towards Kurds has been increasing over last years (Çelik, Bilali, and Iqbal 2017; Dixon and Ergin 2010; KONDA 2015). Although self-reported positive contact between Kurds and Turks is relatively higher than negative contact, negative intergroup attitudes are also prevalent (Bağcı and Turnuklu 2019). Imagined contact, in this regard, may provide a constructed context for Kurds to engage in a positive imagery contact with Turks.

#### 1.4 The Context: Syrians in Turkey

While a latent conflict between Turks and Kurds is going on, in 2011 Turkey opened its borders to Syrian refugees who escaped from the war in their homeland. Although the government expected the war to end very soon<sup>3</sup>, it was not the case. Today 3.672.646 Syrian refugees<sup>4</sup> live in Turkey. Due to the lack of proper laws on refugees, although larger number of Syrians reside in border cities where Kurdish population is dense (e.g., Kilis, Şanlıurfa, Adıyaman), they live in a scattered manner across Turkey. As landlords are hesitant to rent their apartments to Syrians, being afraid of complaints from neighbors and property damage due to crowded families, Syrians

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<sup>3</sup>In September 2012, Turkish President, then the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said “We will go to Damascus as soon as possible. We will pray at the Umayyad Mosque and hug our Syrian brothers” in a speech addressed to the situation of Syrian refugee influx. See: <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/erdogandan-onemli-mesajlar-21386210> (last access: 24.06.2020)

<sup>4</sup>See: <https://multeciler.org.tr/turkiyedeki-suriyeli-sayisi/>

settled in ill-conditioned, abandoned, or overpriced places (Erdogan 2014). This has led to ghettoization of Syrians in certain areas of cities where other city residents feel uncomfortable to go to or even pass by (e.g., Fatih-Vefa, İstanbul). On the other hand, although permission for work have been granted to Syrians, their labor is exploited by the employers (Erdogan 2014). Around 38% of Syrians are predicted to work either as registered or irregularly. Yet, about 85% of Turkish citizens believe that Syrians make their living through state assistance (Erdogan 2020). This finding is consistent with KONDA's research revealing that general public opinion about the Syrians is becoming more and more negative each day<sup>5</sup> (KONDA 2016).

It is important to point out that before the refugee influx, there have been Syrian Arabs who are citizens of Turkey and living especially in the cities across the Syrian-Turkish border. Since Syria was part of the Ottoman Empire before the World War I, the new borders drawn after the war separated villages and families in the official sense. Yet relationships, kinships and intermarriages have continued to exist along the borderline. Also, it is worth noting that cities in the Turkish-Syrian border are densely populated by Kurds as well. Therefore, the borders separated not only Arab villages but also Kurdish villages too. Syrian refugee influx brought not only Arab but also Turkmen and Kurdish Syrians to Turkey. Yet, research focusing on attitudes towards Syrians in Turkey does not specifically examine Kurdish perceptions, in other words do not distinguish between Turks and Kurds. Considering the minority status and disadvantaged position of Kurds in Turkey, this group's specific perceptions and attitudes towards this newly emerging disadvantaged group is an intriguing topic for research.

## 1.5 The Current Study

Turkey as a country where various ethnic groups live together is a fertile field for intergroup studies. Kurds, being the largest ethnic minority group with a history of conflict with Turks, constitute a recent and popular sample among researchers of social sciences (e.g., Bagci, Çelebi, and Karaköse 2017; Bagci, Piyale, and Ebcim 2018; Bilali 2014; Bilali, Iqbal, and Çelik 2018; Çelik 2012; Çelik, Bilali, and Iqbal 2017; Gurses 2020; Neyzi and Darlcl 2015). After the Syrian war broke out and Turkey opened its borders to Syrians, Syrian refugees with a 3.6 million population

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<sup>5</sup>According to KONDA (2016) research, 60% of participants think cities are unsafe and employment opportunities are scarce; 58% thinks that economy has gone bad because of Syrians.

has become one of the largest ethnic groups in Turkey<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, Syrians have also become a potential outgroup now and started to attract scholars' attention (e.g., Bagci et al. 2018; Erdogan 2014,?; Firat and Ataca 2020; Kayaoglu and Erdogan 2019; Sirkeci 2017; Turk et al. 2019).

Although Kurds are citizens of Turkey and Syrians lack such status, Kurds' unrecognized minority status and official negligence of Syrians as they are considered temporary<sup>7</sup>, creates novel intergroup contexts. While Kurds can enjoy their citizenship rights unlike Syrians, Syrians has been much freer enjoying their cultural rights without any regulation by the state on the matter<sup>8</sup>. Also, both Kurds and Syrians are economically disadvantaged groups; while most Syrians are employed unregistered (Erdogan 2020; Kayaoglu and Erdogan 2019), Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia, where the Kurdish population is most dense is found to be the lowest income regions of Turkey (TÜİK 2020). Furthermore, locations where Kurds and Syrians live in Turkey geographically converge. Most of the Syrians live in Southeast Anatolian cities of Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, Hatay, Adana and in Istanbul as well <sup>9</sup>.

Only two studies investigated these two groups simultaneously. Kılıçaslan (2016) examined Turkish Kurds and Syrian Kurds and their relations with regard to shaping urban space in İstanbul. She highlighted the fact that both groups are displaced (Kılıçaslan 2016). Another research by Çetin (2016) studied Syrian labor force in Adana and Mersin. He indicated that Syrians are mostly employed by Kurdish business holders, therefore they interact with them the most (Çetin 2016). Yet, the author has failed to find any research focusing on intergroup relations and related processes between Kurds and Syrians.

Considering the gap both in interminority imagined contact research and the lack of studies focusing on Kurdish-Syrian relationship, Kurds' contact with Syrians can be a significant and appropriate topic for the study. Along with that, examining Kurds' contact with Turks as well provides a ground for comparison of both the interminority and minority-majority imagined contact effects. Also, utilizing imagined contact rather than direct contact aims to create a structured positive contact environment and prevent participants from answering questions based on their past

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<sup>6</sup>Unfortunately, there is no data available to the author's knowledge about current ethnic demography of Turkey. If the latest research by KONDA in 2011 is considered, Syrians are now the third largest ethnic group in Turkey after Turks and Kurds. See: <https://web.archive.org/web/20160303202847/http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2007/03/22/guncel/agun.html> (last access: 05.06.2021)

<sup>7</sup>Turkish state's discourse: "Syrians under temporary protection." See: <https://www.goc.gov.tr/gecici-korumamiz-altindaki-suriyeliler> (last access 05.06.2021)

<sup>8</sup>Syrian-owned businesses were free to use Arabic signs until 2019. Later, they were obliged to use Turkish letters. However, this new rule is not completely in force every city in Turkey.

<sup>9</sup>See: <https://www.goc.gov.tr/gecici-koruma5638> (last access: 05.06.2021)

negative experiences, especially with Turks.

In the following chapter, the quantitative study is presented. In Study I, how Kurds' imagined contact with Syrian refugees and Turkish majority affects their ingroup identification, outgroup attitudes, perceived discrimination, and relative deprivation is investigated. In Study II, which is a qualitative one, questions of the first study are adapted and directed to self-identified Kurds in interview format. Content analysis of the interviews is reported in the Chapter 3. In the conclusion chapter, results and limitations of both studies and future research prospects are discussed.



## 2. STUDY I

Kurds are the largest ethnic minority group in Turkey after Turks (KONDA 2011). The protracted conflict between Turkish military and the Kurdish armed group affects the intergroup relations between these two groups (Uluğ and Cohrs 2019). Yet, Turkish-Kurdish intergroup relations have a long history. Syrian refugees, on the other hand, came to Turkey after civil war in Syria broke out in 2011. The increasing number of Syrians and the uncertainty of how long they will stay in Turkey make Syrians a target group from both societal and research perspective. Since they have possibly become the third largest ethnic group in Turkey after Kurds, Kurdish-Syrian interminority relations need careful investigation. So far, there have not been much research conducted specifically on the relationship between these two groups, let alone a research comparing Kurd's relationship with both Turks and Syrians. The only available research includes majority Turks' imagined intergroup contact with both Syrians and Kurds (Firat and Ataca 2020).

On the other hand, as mentioned in the previous chapter, imagined intergroup contact has been rarely conducted among minority status participants (e.g., Bağcı and Turnuklu 2019; Bağcı, Stathi, and Piyale 2019*a,b*; Bağcı, Piyale, and Ebcim 2018; Vezzali et al. 2015) and interminority imagined contact studies are non-existent in the literature. In order to fill the gap, Study I focused on Kurds' relationship with both majority status Turks and minority status Syrians in Turkey regarding the variables of ingroup identification, outgroup attitudes, relative deprivation, and perceived discrimination.

## 2.1 Variables

### 2.1.1 Ingroup Identification

According to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner 1986), people tend to identify with a group in order to derive a feeling of self-worth. The more positive attributes their ingroup has compared to the outgroup, the more satisfied they will feel about themselves. The process of identifying with a group involves comparison with the other outgroups. Therefore, ingroup identification is an essential part of the intergroup behavior and relations (Tajfel and Turner 1979, 1986). When interethnic conflict exists, ethnic identities play a critical role in intergroup relations (e.g., Verkuyten and Yildiz 2007). In societies with ongoing interethnic conflict, in line with the “group identity reaction model,” individuals tend to identify more with the ingroup and show more ingroup favoritism (Eccleston and Major 2006; Masson and Verkuyten 1993). Intergroup positive contact, on the other hand, is expected to reverse the situation and reduce ethnic identification (Crisp and Beck 2005; Phinney, Ferguson, and Tate 1997; Verkuyten, Thijs, and Bekhuis 2010). Even without conflict, according to Pettigrew (1998), optimal intergroup contact leads to ingroup reappraisal (Pettigrew 1998). Contact reshapes people’s perceptions of the ingroup in a way to be less provincial about their perceptions of other groups. Later he theorized this concept as deprovincialization (Pettigrew 2009). Accordingly, intergroup contact leads people to be less ethnocentric, in other words, it reduces ingroup identification (Pettigrew 1998, 2011).

All considered, one of the outcomes of the Study I is expected to be reduced ingroup identification of Kurds after engaging in a positive imagined contact with a Turk (Hypothesis 1A).

Kurds’ imagined contact with Syrians, on the other hand, can have a variety of responses as regards ingroup identification. Although one might argue that based on the same argument above, the same result should be expected, it may not be the case given that the outgroup in this context is also a minority group. While the dynamics of Kurdish-Turkish relations can be easily defined as a majority-minority relationship under an ongoing conflict, putting the Kurdish-Syrian relations in a framework is more challenging. Also, although there are few studies about Turkish-Syrian intergroup relations (e.g., Bağcı, Çelebi, and Karaköse 2017; Bağcı et al.

2018; Firat and Ataca 2020; Turk et al. 2019), many of these studies have a two group perspective, studying either Kurdish-Turkish relationships or Turkish-Syrian relationships. Only Firat and Ataca (2020) investigated Turkish attitudes towards Kurds and Syrians using imagined contact. The authors defined the two contexts as a high conflict and low conflict context, respectively (Firat and Ataca 2020). Their contextualizing could be adapted and Kurdish-Syrian context can be considered a relatively lower-conflict context compared to the Turkish-Kurdish context.

However, considering the approximate numbers of Syrians that entitle them as the second largest minority group in Turkey after Kurds and with the growing rates of Syrian refugees in Turkey, Syrians can be perceived as a threat for the position of Kurds in the society as the primary ethnic minority group. Besides, Syrians are in a more advantaged position in enjoying their cultural rights, especially the use of mother tongue. In hospitals, immigration offices and certain other public institutions, Syrians are provided with translators, which is not the case for Kurds. Due to the growing hostility towards Syrian refugees in public, these privileges are becoming more and more vocal (Erdogan 2014, 2020). If Kurds find themselves threatened by the presence of a second minority group growing in number, it may activate the distinctiveness threat (Tajfel and Turner 1979, 1986). According to Social Identity Theory, maintaining group distinctiveness is part of one's ingroup's prestige and upholding a positive social identity (Tajfel and Turner 1979, 1986). Also, reactive distinctiveness hypothesis indicates that as the similarity with the relevant outgroup increases, the distinctiveness threat increases as well (Jetten, Spears, and Manstead 1997).

In this regard, Kurds, after imagining a contact with a Syrian may feel distinctiveness threat; hence, identify more with the ingroup (Hypothesis 1B).

### **2.1.2 Outgroup Attitudes**

The idea behind intergroup contact is to reduce prejudice and improve outgroup attitudes and it is a successful technique to do so (Allport 1954; Pettigrew 1998; Tropp and Pettigrew 2005). Yet, previous research showed that contact does not affect minority status groups as it does majority status groups. The contact effect on reducing prejudice is found to be weaker for minority groups (Tropp and Pettigrew 2005). Still, the effect exists and other research found that Kurds' positive contact with Turks is related improved outgroup attitudes (Bagci and Turnuklu 2019). Considering both research, contact is expected to lead Kurds to demonstrate

more positive attitudes toward Turks, yet the anticipated effect is likely to be small (Hypothesis 2A).

As mentioned above, the dynamics of Kurdish-Syrian relationship are different from Kurdish-Turkish relationship since Syrians constitute a newly emerging group and expected to be temporary group, yet their return to Syria is becoming a far possibility each day since the end of war in Syria is not any closer than it was in 2011<sup>1</sup>. In Kurdish-Turkish relations, Kurds are definitely the minority group. In Kurdish-Syrian context, on the other hand, although Kurds may find Syrians as their rival, Syrians may be also considered a lower-status group. Kurds are citizens with full-citizenship rights (maybe not with minority rights), Syrians are not citizens and lack certain privileges such as having limited access to public institutions and job security (Erdogan 2014, 2020). Considering all, Kurds may act as the majority group when engaging with Syrians. In this case, imagined contact is expected to improve Kurdish outgroup attitudes toward Syrians, although this effect may be weaker (Hypothesis 2B).

### **2.1.3 Relative Deprivation and Perceived Discrimination**

Relative deprivation is a social psychological phenomenon that explains the deprivation felt by individuals when they compare themselves or their ingroup with relevant others and outgroups (Pettigrew 2015). And, it has consequences on the individual's interpersonal and intergroup behaviors and attitudes (Pettigrew et al. 2008; Tyler and Lind 2002). Research has revealed that contact with the majority outgroup reduced relative deprivation of minority status group members, while contact with the minority group did not have such effect on relative deprivation of majority group members (Bagci and Turnuklu 2019; Cakal et al. 2011). In line with previous research, in Study I, I expect that imagining contact with a higher-status Turkish outgroup will reduce relative deprivation of Kurds (Hypothesis 3A). Since Syrians have potentially a lower status than Kurds in Turkey, Kurds may perceive themselves as the relative majority group and contact may not affect their relative deprivation after imagining contact with the Syrian outgroup (Hypothesis 3B).

Status differences within the societies induce the perception of discrimination, especially for low-status groups who are more vulnerable to discrimination experiences.

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<sup>1</sup>Syria has deteriorated in Positive Peace in Global Peace Index more than any other country. See: <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/country-close-up-syria-on-the-global-peace-index/> (last access: 19.06.2021)

Since perceived discrimination affects individuals' psychological well-being (Çelebi, Verkuyten, and Bağcı 2017; Schmitt and Branscombe 2002), ample research on intergroup relations has examined perceived discrimination and its effects on psychological well-being, as well as intergroup attitudes and intergroup relations (e.g., Bağcı and Turnuklu 2019; Bağcı and Canpolat 2019; Bağcı, Piyale, and Ebcim 2018; Çelebi, Verkuyten, and Bağcı 2017; Heim, Hunter, and Jones 2011; Reimer et al. 2020; Tropp et al. 2012). Previous direct contact research has revealed that perceived discrimination of minorities can be reduced through contact and cross-group friendships (Dixon, Durrheim, Tredoux, Tropp, Clack, and Eaton 2010; Tropp 2007). For example, an imagined contact study by Bağcı, Piyale, and Ebcim (2018) showed that perceived discrimination of Kurds significantly decreased after imagining contact with a Turk (Bağcı, Piyale, and Ebcim 2018). Expecting the same result, I suggested that imagined contact with the majority Turks will reduce perceived discrimination of Kurds (Hypothesis 4A). Similar to relative deprivation, Kurds may be the higher status group during their contact with the Syrian outgroup, therefore, contact will not affect perceived discrimination of Kurds (Hypothesis 4B).

#### **2.1.4 Exploratory Research Questions**

The research focused mainly on the above-mentioned variables. However, there might be other variables that affects the outcome of the contact or are affected by the contact. For instance, where the participants live in Turkey might affect the dependent variables, since Kurdish population density differs between the West and the East, and it is denser in the latter. Previous research focusing on Kurdish-Turkish contact with participants from the East revealed higher levels of perceived discrimination (Bağcı, Stathi, and Piyale 2019*a,b*). In terms of actual contact for both Kurdish-Turkish and Kurdish-Syrian contexts, the East and the West have differing possibilities. That is, in the East the population density of Syrian refugees is higher (especially in the Southeast), while the Turkish population density is lower compared to the West. In order to see whether any difference occurs when the factor of the home city is accounted for, I also provided additional analyses.

Self-esteem and emotions can be explanatory variables for contact effects on main variables. According to previous research, contact with the outgroup boosts self-esteem (Walker and Crogan 1998); it is positively associated with psychological well-being (e.g., Bağcı and Turnuklu 2019) and social acceptance (e.g., Bağcı, Stathi, and Piyale 2019*a*), and negatively related with intergroup anxiety (e.g., Ioannou, Al

Ramiah, and Hewstone 2018; Turner, West, and Christie 2013). In order to check whether contact affects self-esteem and emotions, these two dependent variables will be added to additional analyses as well.

## 2.2 Method

### 2.2.1 Participants and Procedure

The online survey was filled by 113 participants, but 5 participants who did not self-identified as Kurdish were excluded from the analyses. The final sample consisted of 108 participants (50 females, 58 males,  $M_{age} = 26.46$ ,  $SD_{age} = 7.60$ ). The mean subjective economic status of participants [“How would you rate your economic status,” ranging from 1 (extremely low) to 7 (extremely high)] was middle class ( $M = 3.58$ ,  $SD = 1.38$ ). Regarding education, 58.3% had bachelor’s degrees, 19.4% had college (vocational school) degrees, 13% had master’s or doctorate degrees, 7.4% high school degrees and 1.9% reported having primary or secondary school degrees.

Participants were recruited through convenience sampling and via social media. Participants completed the online survey without any financial support provided. After filling the demographics questionnaire, participants were randomly assigned to one of the three conditions.

The conditions involved imagined contact or the neutral (control) condition (Majority condition,  $N = 35$ ; minority condition  $N = 33$ ; control condition,  $N = 40$ ). In the imagined contact conditions, participants were provided with a positive contact scenario. They were asked to imagine meeting with either a Syrian or a Turk and then write a few sentences about the conversation they had:

“Please imagine for two minutes that you are in a café where you go often. There sits a Syrian who you do not recognize. You chat with the Syrian for 20-30 minutes. After the Syrian you have met left, you think that the conversation was pleasant and interesting. Please think about the details about the conversation.”

Table 2.1 Descriptive Statistics

		N	%
Gender	Female	50	46,3
	Male	58	53,7
Education	Primary School	0	0
	Secondary School	2	1,9
	Highschool	8	7,4
	College	21	19,4
	Bachelor's Degree	63	58,3
	Master's Degree	11	10,2
	Doctorate Degree	3	2,8
Home City	West	55	50,9
	East	53	49,1
City of Birth	West	24	22,2
	East	84	77,8
Income	Lowest	14	13
	Low	12	11,1
	Middle Lower	8	7,4
	Middle	51	47,2
	Upper Middle	17	15,7
	High	6	5,6
	Highest	0	0
Condition assigned	Majority Contact	35	32,4
	Minority Contact	33	30,6
	Neutral (control)	40	37

“Please imagine for two minutes that you are in a café where you go often. There sits a Turk who you do not recognize. You chat with the Turk for 20-30 minutes. After the Turk you have met left, you think that the conversation was pleasant and interesting. Please think about the details about the conversation.”

In the neutral condition, participants were asked to imagine going to hike:

“Please imagine for two minutes that you are hiking in the nature. Please think about the details you imagined about the hiking and what you saw (where are you, is there other people with you, who are they, what is like your surrounding).”

## 2.2.2 Measures

All measures were responded on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 7 where higher scores indicated greater levels of the measured concept. Only outgroup attitudes were measured through a feeling thermometer, where 0 indicated maximum negativity while 100 indicated maximum positivity towards the relevant outgroup.

**Manipulation checks:** In order to confirm the three conditions (Majority contact, minority contact and control) were similar in terms of difficulty, interest, and realism, participants were asked how they found the imagination task (“How difficult it was to imagine this situation?” or “How interesting the situation you imagined was?”) on a 7-point Likert scale, higher scores indicating higher levels of the concept (the difficulty measure was reversed). These manipulation checks were previously used in several studies (e.g., Bagci, Stathi, and Piyale 2019a; Harwood et al. 2011; Yetkili et al. 2018).

**Ingroup Identification:** To measure ingroup identification, the study used Multi-group Ethnic Identity Measure – Revised (MEIM-R) developed by Phinney and Ong (2007). MEIM-R included items such as “I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs” or “I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group.” Participants answered questions on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). The scale had a very good reliability ( $\alpha = .90$ ).

**Outgroup Attitudes:** In order to evaluate outgroup attitudes of the participants, a feeling thermometer was utilized. Feeling thermometers were used in previous research for similar purposes (e.g., Verkuyten 2005; Verkuyten and Thijs 2010). Participants were asked to assess separately how they feel about the given ethnic groups in Turkey (Armenian, Circassian, Kurds, Syrians, and Turks; only the last three were relevant while the first two were asked to avoid Hawthorne effect), 0 indicating the most negative while 100 indicating the most positive attitude.

**Relative Deprivation:** The questionnaire included a 2-item Likert scale (adapted from Cakal et al. 2011) asking participants to assess social and economic status of their ethnic group compared to other groups in Turkey. The scale ranged from 1 (= *extremely disadvantageous*) to 7 (= *extremely advantageous*). The reliability was acceptable ( $\alpha = .68$ ).

**Perceived Discrimination:** To assess perceived discrimination at personal and group level, participants were asked two questions on a Likert scale ranging 1 (= *never*) to 7 (= *all the time*): “How often do you think you are discriminated against

personally about your ethnic identity in Turkey?” and “How often do you think members of the ethnic group that you feel belong to are discriminated against in Turkey?” (adapted from Tropp et al. 2012). The scale’s reliability was good ( $\alpha = .79$ ).

***Self-esteem:*** In order to measure self-esteem, Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem Scale was used. Example items of the scale were “I feel that I have a number of good qualities” and “I feel that I’m a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.” The scale’s reliability was good enough ( $\alpha = .68$ ).

***Emotions:*** For measuring emotions, participants were asked “How do you feel right now?” on a 7-point scale with separate items, 1 indicating negative feelings such as bad, worried, and sad, while 7 indicating positive feelings that are the opposite of the negative feelings such as good, cheerful, and happy.

## 2.3 Results

To make sure whether any difference exists between the conditions in terms of appealing, difficulty and realism, a MANOVA test was run on the manipulation check scale. Results showed that the condition did not have any significant effect on difficulty ( $M = 5.79$ ,  $SD = 1.40$ ),  $p = .30$ ) and realism ( $M = 5.18$ ,  $SD = 1.87$ ),  $p = .90$ , but it had a statistically significant effect on the appeal of the task. Accordingly, the control condition ( $M = 5.48$ ,  $SD = 1.55$ ) was found significantly more interesting than the imagined majority contact condition ( $M = 4.29$ ,  $SD = 1.96$ ),  $F(2, 105) = 4.59$ ,  $p = .012$ . Participants found going to hike scenario significantly more interesting than having a conversation with a Turk. Therefore, it is used as covariate in further analyses.

In order to measure the effect of the contact conditions (neutral vs. majority vs. minority) on ingroup identification, relative deprivation, and perceived discrimination, a MANCOVA test was conducted. Results showed that condition did not have an overall effect on the dependent variables  $F(6, 204) = 1.28$ ,  $.267$ ; Wilk’s  $\lambda = .929$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .036$ . Only a statistically significant effect of contact was found on ingroup identification ( $M = 5.42$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ ),  $F(2, 104) = 3.10$ ;  $p = 0.49$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .056$ . Between-subjects tests, confirming Hypothesis 1B, revealed a significant difference between the minority contact ( $M = 5.78$ ,  $SD = 1.14$ ) and neutral conditions ( $M = 5.08$ ,  $SD = 1.35$ ),  $p = .015$ .

The effect of contact on relative deprivation ( $M = 4.06$ ,  $SD = .63$ )  $p = .58$  and perceived discrimination ( $M = 4.51$ ,  $SD = 1.46$ )  $p = .41$  was not significant. Hypotheses 3B and 4B suggested that contact with the minority outgroup would not affect the level of relative deprivation and perceived discrimination, respectively. In line with the hypotheses, the Syrian contact condition ( $M_{RD} = 4.01$ ,  $SD_{RD} = .65$ ;  $M_{PD} = 4.68$ ,  $SD_{PD} = 1.35$ ) did not differentiate significantly between neutral  $p_{RD} = .88$ ,  $p_{PD} = .20$  and contact with a Turk conditions  $p_{RD} = .36$ ,  $p_{PD} = .99$ .

A 3 X 3 mixed ANOVA (between-subjects factor: condition and within-subjects factor: target group) was run to test contact effects on intergroup attitudes towards both Kurdish ingroup and Syrian and Turkish outgroups. Results revealed significant differences between target groups  $F(2, 103) = 3.30$ ,  $p = .041$ ; Wilk's  $\lambda = .940$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .060$ . Accordingly, Kurds evaluated their ingroup higher ( $M = 85.18$ ,  $SD = 19.88$ ) compared to Turks ( $M = 75.64$ ,  $SD = 24.04$ ) and Syrians ( $M = 51.85$ ,  $SD = 31.30$ ) in all conditions. There was no significant interaction between target group attitudes and condition  $F(4, 206) = .585$ ,  $p = .674$ ; Wilk's  $\lambda = .978$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .011$ . Condition, approached significance levels in terms of attitudes  $F(2, 104) = 2.11$ ,  $p = .126$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .039$ . The marginal means of attitudes compared to the conditions can be seen in the Figure 2.1.

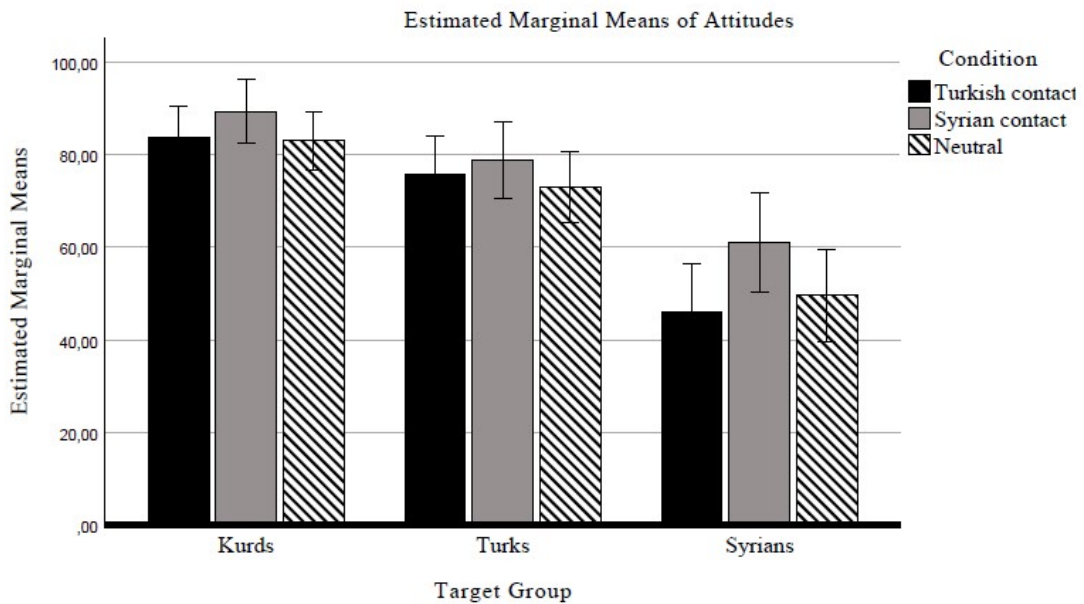
Table 2.2 Means and Standard Deviations for Attitudes

Conditions	Kurds		Turks		Syrians		
	N	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Majority Contact	35	82.85	21.77	76.00	23.28	46.28	27.23
Minority Contact	33	89.39	18.86	78.78	23.28	60.90	32.14
Neutral Condition	40	83.75	18.90	72.75	25.51	49.25	33.00
Total	108	85.18	19.88	75.64	24.04	51.85	31.30

Accordingly, Kurds, in both majority contact ( $M = 82.85$ ,  $SD = 21.77$ ) and minority contact ( $M = 89.39$ ,  $SD = 18.86$ ) as well as neutral conditions ( $M = 83.75$ ,  $SD = 18.90$ ) evaluated their ingroup more favorably than other groups. For all three target groups, minority contact led to more positive outgroup attitudes ( $M_{Turk} = 78.78$ ,  $SD_{Turk} = 23.28$ ;  $M_{Syrian} = 60.90$ ,  $SD_{Syrian} = 32.14$ ). Finally, the effect of condition was more pronounced on attitudes towards Syrians. Kurds who imagined a contact with a Turk evaluated Syrians the most negative ( $M = 46.28$ ,  $SD = 27.23$ ), while those who imagined a contact with a Syrian evaluated the Syrian outgroup the most positive ( $M = 60.90$ ,  $SD = 32.14$ ). All the means for attitudes can be seen in Table

2.2.

Figure 2.1 Estimated Marginal Means of Condition on Attitudes



Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: How interesting the situation you imagined was? = 4,94

Error bars: 95% CI

### 2.3.1 Additional Analyses

When the factor of participants' home city (where they currently live, East or West<sup>2</sup>) was added to MANOVA test along with the conditions, overall effect of their interaction on the variables increased however not to a statistically significant level  $F(6, 200) = 1.83$ ;  $p = .094$ ; Wilk's  $\lambda = .898$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .056$ . Also, the interaction of condition and home city were found to be more effective, yet not significant, on perceived discrimination ( $M = 4.51$ ,  $SD = 1.46$ ),  $F(2, 102) = 2.68$ ;  $p = .073$  compared to the condition alone  $F(2, 104) = 1.27$ ;  $p = .419$ . According to descriptive statistics, the greatest difference is seen for residents of Western cities, between majority ( $M = 5.00$ ,  $SD = 1.42$ ) and control condition ( $M = 3.77$ ,  $SD = 2.00$ ). Participants who live in Western cities of Turkey, where Turkish population is denser, demonstrated higher levels of perceived discrimination when imagining a contact with a Turk compared to the control condition.

A MANCOVA test was conducted to measure the effect of contact on self-esteem

<sup>2</sup>In the Eastern cities Kurdish population is much denser

and emotions. Results revealed that contact had an overall effect on dependent variables  $F(4, 206) = 2.60$ ;  $p = .037$ ; Wilk's  $\lambda = .906$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .048$ . While overall contact effects on self-esteem did not reach statistical significance  $p = .075$ , univariate tests revealed a statistically significant difference between the minority ( $M = 4.79$ ,  $SD = .66$ ) and majority conditions ( $M = 5.10$ ,  $SD = .47$ ),  $p = .033$ . Accordingly, contact with the majority outgroup increased the level of self-esteem compared to interminority contact. On the other hand, an overall effect of condition was found on feelings  $p = .031$ . Contact with the majority ( $M = 4.72$ ,  $SD = 1.58$ ) significantly led to more positive emotions compared to the neutral condition ( $M = 3.8$ ,  $SD = 1.44$ ),  $p = .009$ .

## 2.4 Discussion

Study I investigated imagined contact effects for minority status Kurds with the relative majority outgroup, Turks, and another minority status outgroup, Syrian refugees. I had eight initial hypotheses, and there was evidence for four of them. Interestingly, the only hypotheses that are validated by the study are the ones that are related to interminority contact. The possible cause of this can be that Kurds perceived themselves as a majority group when facing the Syrian refugees. Since previous research revealed that contact is a more effective technique for majority groups than for minority groups (Tropp and Pettigrew 2005), it is possible that changes among minority group perceptions occur when they imagined contact with a more subordinate minority group, where they potentially perceived themselves as the relative majority group. This also raises the questions of whether the Kurdish-Syrian intergroup context is a pure interminority setting; although both groups can be considered numerical minorities in Turkey, how Kurds evaluate their position during the contact can change according to their interaction partner.

An overall effect of contact was found on ingroup identification, where contact with Syrians increased ingroup identification of Kurds compared to the control condition. Validating Hypothesis 1B, Kurds identified more with the ingroup. While it was initially presumed that it could be due to distinctiveness threat (Jetten, Spears, and Manstead 1997; Tajfel and Turner 1979, 1986), whereby Kurds potentially perceived themselves threatened by the Syrians who have grown rapidly in terms of numbers

since the last 10 years<sup>3</sup>, it is also possible that especially Kurds, as the primary minority status group in Turkey would perceive threat to their status quo, given that Syrians are likely to be expected to challenge their position in the society, by posing various types of threats.

The effect of condition was not significant on outgroup attitudes, but it had approached significance. Accordingly, minority contact was more effective for improving outgroup attitudes, especially for Syrians, in line with the Hypothesis 2B and in line with the assumption that interminority imagined contact may improve outgroup attitudes, when the target outgroup is a relatively more subordinate group compared to the participants' own group. Nevertheless, these effects were small and negligible, but necessitates replication with larger and more representative samples.

Contact had no significant effects on relative deprivation or perceived discrimination. For contact with Syrians, this was in line with the hypotheses 3B and 4B, Kurds may have perceived themselves as the majority group when interacting with a Syrian refugee and therefore did not report particular changes in terms of relative deprivation and perceived discrimination from Syrian outgroup.

Contrary to hypotheses 1A, 2A, 3A and 4A, contact with the majority outgroup did not have effect on ingroup identification, outgroup attitudes, relative deprivation, and perceived discrimination. These results are consistent with previous studies by Bagci, Piyale, and Ebcim (2018) and Bagci, Stathi, and Piyale (2019a) where contact with Turks did not have a significant effect on outgroup attitudes (Bagci, Stathi, and Piyale 2019b; Bagci, Piyale, and Ebcim 2018) and relative deprivation (Bagci, Stathi, and Piyale 2019b). In fact, results of Study I showed that those who imagined contact with a Turk, seemed to have evaluated Turks lower in terms of outgroup attitudes. Considering the previous literature, these results are not that surprising. First of all, imagined contact is suggested to be effective in segregated societies where contact between groups does not exist or is limited (Crisp and Turner 2009). Kurds contact with Turks is far from being rare; the two groups have lived in close proximity in Turkey for years and physical desegregation is rather rare. Nevertheless, desegregated settings do not guarantee the occurrence of positive contact and despite contact opportunities, especially in conflict settings, people are also exposed to unintended negativities during contact interventions (Guffler and Wagner 2017). The reason why imagined contact is utilized for this study in the first place was to create a structured conversation and make sure that it is a positive and pleasant contact experience. Possibly, due to prior negative contact experiences and the atmosphere of ongoing conflict, imagined contact may not be as positive

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<sup>3</sup>See:<https://multeciler.org.tr/turkiyedeki-suriyeli-sayisi/>

as demanded. In fact, a study by Bagci, Stathi, and Piyale (2019a) investigated Kurdish participants' description of the imagined encounter and revealed that for 28.95% of the participants reported more ingroup saliency and 26.32% of the participants stated prejudice expectation from Turkish outgroup (Bagci, Stathi, and Piyale 2019b). If participants imagined rather a negative contact despite the instructions, this could easily lead to negative outcomes in terms of intergroup relations. As a matter of fact, previous research reported that negative contact is associated with ingroup salience (e.g., Paolini, Harwood, and Rubin 2010) and negative outgroup attitudes (e.g., Bagci and Turnuklu 2019).

In additional analyses, home city is added to the main analysis in MANOVA. The interaction of condition and home city as independent variables had a marginally significant overall effect on the dependent variables. Also, it is found to be effective, yet not significant on perceived discrimination. Accordingly, Kurds who are living in the West and assigned to control condition reported less perceived discrimination than Kurds who are assigned to majority contact condition. This result is in line with what is argued above about how prior contact can be an important confound for this study. In Western cities, the Turkish population is much denser and engaging in contact with Turks in daily life is almost inevitable. Therefore, the possibility of negative contact experiences is higher for Western cities. Another explanation can be the "wallpaper effect" that suggests minority groups to be immune to contact effects (Barlow et al. 2013). The wallpaper effect helps us to understand both why Kurds in Western cities showed greater perceived discrimination and why contact did not have an overall effect on dependent variables in general. Most of the Eastern cities have Kurdish-majority populations, nevertheless, there are quite a high number of Turks who are either locals or appointed civil servants such as teachers, police, military or public legal officers. Therefore, Kurds who lives in the East still engage in contact with Turks.

Nevertheless, additional analyses revealed other results that shows imagined contact was not that inconsequential for Kurds. Accordingly, Kurds who imagined engaging in contact with Turks reported higher self-esteem than those who imagined contact with Syrians. Also, contact had a statistically significant overall effect on emotions, where majority contact is found to be associated with more positive emotions. It means that imagined contact with the majority outgroup may have led Kurds to temporarily feel better. This could be because they feel accepted by the majority outgroup when they imagine a positive contact with them (Bagci, Stathi, and Piyale 2019a) and in line with previous research arguing that for minority group status individuals, their expectation from the majority group is often an important predictor of their adaptation (Şafak Ayvazoğlu, Kunuroglu, and Yağmur 2021).

The Kurdish-Turkish contact has been investigated by various intergroup contact researchers, yet most of the research has revealed contradicting results, especially those focusing on Kurds (e.g., Bağcı and Turnuklu 2019; Bağcı and Çelebi 2018; Bağcı, Stathi, and Piyale 2019*a,b*; Bağcı, Piyale, and Ebcim 2018; Bilali, Iqbal, and Çelik 2018). The history of conflict between Kurds and Turks seems to be an important determinant of their intergroup relationship. As Firat and Ataca (2020) suggested, the Turkish-Kurdish relationship is a high conflict context compared to Turkish-Syrian relationship (Firat and Ataca 2020). Longer history of relations and perception of conflict and mistrust (Çelik, Bilali, and Iqbal 2017; KONDA 2015; Uluğ and Cohrs 2019) might have decreased the possibility for contact to lead to positive outcomes such as decreased relative deprivation and perceived discrimination and improved outgroup attitudes.

Study I validated initial hypotheses about interminority contact, while could not find any effect of majority contact on dependent variables. Further explanations for these results could be speculated, however an important need may be to investigate more deeply how imagined intergroup contact is 'imagined' in the first place. As such previous research demonstrated Kurds' imagined contact with Turks to be complex, and only conditionally positive. Therefore, in order to comprehend better to what extent Kurds imagine a positive contact with Turks and Syrians and how it is related with the same dependent variables (ingroup identification, relative deprivation, perceived discrimination, and outgroup attitudes), a second qualitative study was conducted.

### 3. STUDY II

Based on the findings of Study I, a second exploratory study, that is qualitative, was conducted in order to get more detailed answers from Kurdish participants, understand the nature of the contact they imagined and investigate why imagined contact did not have the expected effects on the dependent variables such as outgroup attitudes, ingroup identification, relative deprivation, and perceived discrimination. So far, the majority of imagined contact studies have been quantitative and has not been concerned with the specific details that participants described in imagined contact scenarios, except a few studies. For example, Husnu and Paolini (2019) examined the contact scenarios visualized by participants in terms of quality and valence. Bagci, Stathi, and Piyale (2019a) examined the contents of imagined contact scenarios in order to reveal whether participants actually described positive scenarios. The authors found that among both Turkish and Kurdish participants (in an open conflict intergroup context), imagined contact was described as a positive interaction, but which depended on various conditions such as the political content. Only one imagined contact study has prominently utilized qualitative methods (Ioannou and Panagiotou 2020), yet the study also only analyzed the description of the imagined scenario of the quantitative data with qualitative methods. The use of qualitative methodology in imagined contact research can provide benefits by offering a great depth into participants' imagined contact experiences, by allowing researchers to guide participants and link contact to the variables of interest.

## 3.1 Method

### 3.1.1 Participants and Procedure

10 participants (2 males and 8 females) consented to be interviewed by participating in online interviews for a study about Kurds and their relationships with other groups. Self-identified Kurdish participants were recruited through convenience and snowball sampling. Five of the participants live in a Western city. One of them is in a Western city for university education (P8), while her family resides in an Eastern city. The other five participants live in Eastern cities. One of them (P10) had lived in a Western city during his university education and then went back to his homeland in the East. More detailed descriptives can be found in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Descriptives

Participants	Gender	City	Occupation	Age
P1	Female	Diyarbakır	Social Responsibility Volunteer	24
P2	Male	Konya	Tradesman	26
P3	Female	Mardin	Teacher	25
P4	Female	Ağrı	Teacher	27
P5	Female	Konya	-	25
P6	Female	Mardin	Student	19
P7	Female	İstanbul	Student	32
P8	Female	İstanbul	Student	23
P9	Female	Uşak	Student	24
P10	Male	Şanlıurfa	Teacher	28

Interviews were held online using both Zoom and Google Meet. Only one interview was held over phone due to the participant's lack of access to the mentioned software. Before interviews, all participants were required to fill the information and consent form online.

The study consisted of three stages. In the first stage, interviewees were asked

to imagine a positive interaction with a Turk and then gave details about this interaction. The imagination scenario is below:

“Imagine going out any day of the week and meeting a Turkish person wherever you go. You sit and chat for about half an hour and have a good time. What kind of environment do you imagine? What is the other person like?”

Later, they were asked the following questions:

- What would you talk about? Would ethnic issues be brought up?
- After your conversation with this person, how would you feel about your ethnic group? How would you evaluate your belonging and loyalty to your group and your identification with your ethnicity in particular?
- How would you feel about the position of your ethnic group compared to Turks after this encounter? Would you think your ethnic group is in a better or worse condition than Turks in terms of social and economic rights? Or would you think your ethnic group is discriminated against?

In the second stage, participants were asked to imagine a positive encounter with a Syrian refugee. The same questions were altered accordingly. In the third stage, interviewees were asked to compare two encounters and their attitudes towards both groups. The questions were as follow:

- When you compare these two conversations, in which environment did you feel more comfortable/uncomfortable? What was it that made you feel comfortable/uncomfortable?
- Which group do you have more positive attitudes towards? Which of these two people you were chatting with would you like to meet again?
- Which of the Turks and Syrians you chat with do you think you have more in common? Why?

Due to the nature of the semi-structured interview method, sometimes the interviewer diverted from the questions and/or asked more details about the given answers, either to clarify the statement or to discover more about it. Yet, every participant, one way or another, were asked all the questions above.

Here, imagined intergroup interactions with novel outgroup members were particularly focused on, rather than existing contacts, for two reasons. First, this would

have allowed interactions to be similar in terms of intimacy. In other words, all participants were likely to imagine a relatively positive and short-term interaction. Second, considering that many participants would not have an already existing actual intergroup contact, imagining intergroup contact would have created the possibility to mentally engage in contact processes even contact opportunities were non-existent in real life situations.

Study II aimed to find answers to the questions (1) whether the contact imagined by Kurdish participants with Turkish and Syrian outgroups is positive, (2) how Kurdish participants' ingroup identification, outgroup attitudes and levels of relative deprivation and perceived discrimination are affected by majority and interminority contact and (3) whether contact with the majority Turks and interminority contact with Syrian refugees differ.

Interviews were analyzed through thematic analysis methods manually (without use of any software), where interviewees' answers were evaluated under the themes of the variables of the initial study that are ingroup identification, outgroup attitudes, relative deprivation and perceived discrimination. Therefore, participants' answers were grouped under various themes examined in Study 1.

## **3.2 Results**

### **3.2.1 Imagined Scenario with Turks**

Almost all participants indicated that a conversation with a Turk is something they do have often. Therefore, for instance, one interviewee, (P4 - female, 27, teacher) from Ağrı asked whether she should imagine a conversation that is held in Ağrı or in a Western city and explained the reason why she wanted to differentiate between two situations by talking about a conversation she had once with an old man at airport in İstanbul:

“The old man asked me ‘where are you from?’ When I said ‘I am from Ağrı,’ he asked whether I am Kurd. I said ‘Yes.’ He said, ‘No problem

(olsun), those are our people, too.’ Of course, we are, too, people of this country, we lived through the same history, we fought the same battles. I am also a person of this country. I think, saying ‘olsun’ is humiliating, if you ask me.”

She indicated that unlike those who are in the West, Turks in Ağrı live in harmony with Kurds, sharing certain culture and traditions and sometimes even using both Turkish and Kurdish interchangeably. According to P4, Turks in Ağrı are neither prejudiced against Kurds nor marginalize them. Every Kurdish family has Turkish members, and every Turkish family has Kurdish members. Therefore, she thought that it would matter if the conversation were happening in Ağrı or in a Western city. When she was asked how it would differ from each other, she said that *“In the West, I develop a defense mechanism and feel an urge to prove myself that I am educated, and I love my country. Why do people think that the East is undeveloped, or every Kurd is a traitor?”*

Just like P4, participants, from the very beginning, when they were asked to describe the conversation with a Turk and how is the person they talked to like, their answers referenced to perceived discrimination and relative deprivation. Also, difference between the responses from Eastern participants and Western participants has later become clearer with regard to ingroup identification, relative deprivation, and perceived discrimination as well.

### **3.2.1.1 Ingroup Identification**

Participants who live in Eastern cities reported more ingroup identification than participants who live in Western cities. Participants from the West reported that they cannot speak Kurdish except P7 (female, 32) who stated that she has lived in İstanbul since her family moved to İstanbul from Adıyaman 17 years ago. Yet only Kurdish-speaking participant from the West (P7) reported the least ingroup identification, saying that *“I don’t perceive Kurds as a group. I don’t feel like we are a group, something separate from Turkey.”*

Three participants from the East stated that their ingroup identification or their feelings of belongingness for their ethnicity would increase, if the Turk they have met were *“emphasizing his/her superiority”* (P1, female from Diyarbakır, 24, social responsibility volunteer), *“demonstrating Turkish nationalism and marginalizing her”* (P4), or *“judgmental and discriminatory”* (P10, male from Şanlıurfa, 28, teacher).

Also, P5 (female, 25) from Konya stated that *“After marrying my husband (a Turk) I left my ethnicity. I see only my parents (among her Kurdish family and relatives) a couple of times in a year.”* Interviewees from Western cities implied that they do not have feelings of belonging for Kurdish ethnicity. P8 (female, 23), who came from Şanlıurfa to İstanbul for university education said that *“I don’t have Kurdish nationalism or any kind of nationalism, I don’t feel that kind of belongingness because it is not something I or someone else can choose. I don’t do that kind of internalization, and I don’t think well about who does that.”* Similarly, P9 (female, 24, from Uşak, student) said *“I do not know, maybe because I don’t speak Kurdish or because I grew up in Aegean, I don’t feel like to belong to Kurdish ethnicity. Yes, I know my origin, I do not deny it, but I can’t tell that I could develop a sense of belonging.”* On the other hand, P3 approached to the question from a cultural perspective. She said:

*“It (ethnic identification) depends on how you are treated by the person you talk to. Sometimes I complain about my ethnic group, but sometimes I am proud of it. Particularly, in terms of culture, I think highly about my culture and the nature of my people. I think, in modern times, people have become machines and lost their souls, especially in big cities. Since Kurds live mostly in rural areas, they maintain their family ties and cultural values. When I imagine a conversation with a Turk, I see that s/he is estranged from these values. In this regard, I am proud of my own culture. However, due to certain cultural and traditional pressure, very tight and close family relations, and disregard of individuality makes me complain about my own culture.”*

In general, Kurds living in the West has lower ingroup identification with inability to speak Kurdish, while Kurds living in the East reported increased ingroup identification when they imagined a negative contact with a Turk. Although the instruction is to imagine a positive contact, when participants were asked whether ethnic issues would be brought up and how would they feel about their ethnic group and identification with the ingroup afterwards, they thought about the possible negative situation as well. Even, one of the participants, P6 (female, 19, from Mardin, student) told that she would test the person in front of her to see whether s/he is a prejudiced person. If s/he is, then she would stop talking to her/him. This kind of answers can lead researchers to question the survey method for imagined contact. Even though instructions are designed to make participants imagine a positive contact, sometimes, clearly, respondents may not imagine a positive contact per se.

### 3.2.1.2 Relative Deprivation and Perceived Discrimination

Interviewees reported varied positions about relative deprivation and perceived discrimination. Most of the participants from the Eastern cities revealed higher levels of relative deprivation and/or perceived discrimination, while participants from the Western cities showed lower levels of the relevant concepts, even though some of them had discrimination experiences. Here, it is important to note that, although interviewees were asked whether they feel deprived or discriminated during the imagined contact, they answered relevant questions thinking about overall situation of Kurds and Turks.

P3 (from Mardin) remarked the scarcity of the social-cultural opportunities in the East in comparison to the West. She said:

“When we look at the West, a lot of cultural activities exist for young people to educate themselves. A young person can easily participate in intellectual circles, go to a concert or to a play. However, it is not the same for a Kurd. Eastern cities have one or two cultural centres or not. This is a handicap stemmed from the state. On the other hand, there are obstacles stemmed from families and culture. For instance, here, there are a lot of young people who are talented and interested in music. Private courses available for these people, however, this time, families restrain the youngsters because they don't think it is necessary.”

She, in the beginning of the interview, described the Turk in front of her as someone “*who is raised in Western culture, has a wider perspective, more advanced in civilizational sense, who can make her/his decision without family pressure (unlike a Kurd.)*” She also indicated that she would feel like to prove herself to a Turk that she is not a stereotypical Kurd, and she would constantly feel marginalized. P6 (from Mardin) thinks that the East is far behind the West in terms of economics and education. She said, “*I think we are ostracized on certain matters. Even if we gain places (materialistic), they won't accept us. I think we are discriminated against because they always see us as ignorant, bigoted, who work hard and are exploited.*” P4 (from Ağrı) complained about Turks who live in the West asking about the level of development in Ağrı. She said, “*In their eyes, Kurds are uneducated and only do farming and animal husbandry.*” She also mentioned her friends who did not use to be Kurdish nationalists until they were appointed to the Western cities and told that “*It means there is discrimination.*” P4 also added that “*All Turkish citizen have the same rights. I do not think that there is a systemic discrimination by the*

state, but a part of society consciously or unconsciously marginalizes the rest of the society.” P1 (from Diyarbakır), on the other hand, pointed out the gap between the East and the West of Turkey in terms of provided services such as quality of schools and the infrastructure. She said that *“It is debatable whether this is done against Kurds or against all the peoples of the East; because Kurds are not the only people living in the East.”* She also thinks that the status of Kurds has become better compared to 20 years ago: *“I think I express myself more comfortably (compared to the past). This shows that Kurds made progress.”* Similarly, P9 (from Uşak) thinks that, although there is a prevalent racist discourse against Kurds, such expressions belittling Kurds (*“this a Kurdish color, only a Kurd would wear that”*), the situation for Kurds develops for the better. According to P5, Turks accepting, even liking Kurds. P2 (male, 26, tradesman from Konya), on the other hand, said that *“Some people refuse to do business with us because of our ethnicity, yet some people especially want to do business with us because they think our people are more trustworthy. Still, I have relatives who cannot get a girl to marry (because of his ethnicity).”* P8 (from İstanbul) reported that she was not ostracized from anywhere or accepted to somewhere, especially because she was a Kurd. Yet, she mentioned a man who said that his family would not accept her as their daughter-in-law because she is a Kurd, but they would eventually like her after they get to know her. Similarly, P7 (from İstanbul) mentioned that she was marginalized in high school because of the way she speaks Turkish when she recently moved to İstanbul from Adıyaman. She said that:

“I didn’t feel deprived, rather I thought ‘these are the conditions here’ and tried to fix my Turkish speaking. If we do our best individually, we can achieve the best position in the field we work in. I don’t feel like we are hampered because we are Kurds.”

P10 (from Şanlıurfa) saying something very similar with P7 told that *“I see myself as equal with a Turk. If I work enough, I will get the same materialistic resources as a Turk. I don’t have to work more than a Turk to get the same resources.”* He spoke very confident that Kurds are not discriminated against. He said that *“In Turkey, I think ethnicity has nothing to do with socioeconomic status. We see people who lived here but engaged in trade and has much better financial capacity than a Turk in the West.”*

Even though the levels of relative deprivation and perceived discrimination are seemed to be higher for the Kurds who live in Eastern cities, especially P10 did not express any relative deprivation and perceived discrimination precisely. Those

who lives in the West and reported lower or no identification with Kurdish ethnicity (P7 and P8) did not state relative deprivation or perceived discrimination, yet both talked about a discrimination experience. Almost all the participants agree that there are both racist and open-minded, inclusive Turks, and most of them reported that the situation for Kurds is changing for the better.

Among these participants, it is possible to conclude that those who live in the West are either assimilated or acculturated into Turkishness. P10, who is currently living in Şanlıurfa-Ceylanpınar, had lived in İstanbul for almost a decade. Therefore, although he identifies himself as Kurd, he does not see Turkish and Kurdish identities clashing. Those who live in the East, especially P3 and P4 are higher identifiers of Kurdish ethnicity, yet they have been travelling to the West often (P3 goes to İstanbul for her master's education and P4 visits her relatives in İzmir). Therefore, they engage in contact with Turks frequently. Being well-educated teachers, but not being treated accordingly in the West, make them feel deprived and discriminated. Their references to proving themselves to Turks or getting accepted by Turks are not coincidence. Obviously, when they think about a contact with a Turk, they recall negative experiences, even though they were instructed to imagine a positive one.

Contact with Turks, as it is stated by some participants, is something Kurds have often. Syrians, on the other hand, have recently come to Turkey and emerged as a new group attracting attention.

### **3.2.2 Imagined Scenario with Syrians**

When asked to imagine a nice, pleasant conversation with a Syrian, participants reported that they either have never met a Syrian before or they have been meeting Syrians in a humanitarian help and charity context. Three teachers from the Eastern cities indicated that they have Syrian colleagues or students.

The overall answers of interviewees showed that they are quite empathetic towards Syrians, even those who reported higher levels of relative deprivation. Also, some participants pointed out the cultural or experience related similarities, such as close family ties and experiencing expatriation ("gurbet"). For instance, P2 pointed out the migration experience and sympathized with Syrians saying that "*I came to Konya 10 years ago, I know how it feels like to move to a new place. I would think that I understand the person in front of me.*"

Regarding the perceived discrimination and relative deprivation, most of the interviewees agreed that Syrians are in a worse condition than Kurds and the discrimination towards Kurds has been redirected toward Syrians for the last decade and Kurds have tagged along with the discriminating Syrians trend.

### 3.2.2.1 Ingroup Identification

In the previous study, ingroup identification of Kurds increased after imagining a contact with a Syrian. This outcome was supported only by P3's and P5's answers. The others reported either no effect or a decrease in ingroup identification. P3 previously compared Turks and Kurds and indicated that Turks are raised in a freer and more democratic environment and their individuality is respected while growing up, unlike Kurds. P3 stated that:

“I would feel more attached to my culture when I talked with a Syrian because we have maintained our cultural values better. They have adapted to modern, European lifestyle. I don't mean this in materialistic sense, it is rather about mentality. Kurds lack contemporary mindset, and therefore we feel inferiority complex towards Turks. I don't see this in Syrians (They don't have inferiority complex). They have more advanced mentality and world view than us.”

P5, also, pointed out culture and traditions and said that *“I would like better my ethnic group because I could not have taken a liking of Syrian traditions.”*

P3 and P5 indicated increased ingroup identification, however it does not seem to be related to distinctiveness threat as it is hypothesized for Study I. P3's statement rather reflects mixed feelings both about liking how Kurds maintain their culture unlike Syrians, yet complaining about the same culture for being too repressive and stating about liking the way how Syrians do not have inferiority complex and have a broader world view. P5, on the other hand, only preferred her own culture over Syrians because she could not grow to like Syrian traditions. It is difficult to find a link between the two answers, but these answers do not seem to indicate a distinctiveness threat.

P1 and P6 reported that their feelings about the ingroup would not be affected after talking to a Syrian. P1 said that:

“I know the history of my group and I know that my culture, language, lifestyle and traditions contribute to the cultural diversity. Therefore, it would not change. Even though I identify myself as Kurd, I don't know, maybe my ancestors came from Syria or Iraq. I don't think my perspective about my ingroup would change.”

Likewise, P6 stated that her my opinion about her group would not change after talking to other people or learning about their culture.

P4 reported that she sees Syrians as a cultural diversity and likes to learn about them. After experiencing a problem in the West, she said then:

“Why do I have to live through this? Among all other countries in the world, I was born in Turkey. And among all the cities, I was born in Ağrı. Besides, I was born as a Kurd. If I were a Turk, I would not have to experience this.”

She said that she later regretted thinking this way, and indicated that meeting someone with a different ethnic background helps her to see how every culture is a diversity and appreciate her own culture. P10, unlike any other participant, mentioned how he would identify more with Turks in general when meeting a Syrian or any other foreigner. He said that:

“When I meet with Syrians, I see myself as more of a citizen of Turkey than a Kurd. When I went abroad, I always introduce myself as a Turk rather than a Kurd. When I talk to a Syrian who is not aware of these things (Turkey's ethnic diversity), I feel more like a Türkiyeli (Turkish, someone from Turkey). Those who knows about different ethnic groups in Turkey might ask whether I am a Kurd, a Turk or an Arab, then I would say I am a Kurd.”

P10's reflection on ethnic identity is consistent with Study I's hypotheses suggesting that Kurds may perceive themselves as the majority. His answer also reminds both the Common Ingroup Identity Model (Gaertner et al. 1993) and the Common Enemy Effect (De Jaegher and Hoyer 2016). According to Common Ingroup Identity Model, creating a common identity for the hostile groups can improve intergroup relations (e.g., Dovidio, Gaertner, and Saguy 2007; Gaertner et al. 1993). Common Enemy Effect, on the other hand, suggests that the presence of a common enemy may increase solidarity among different groups (De Jaegher and Hoyer 2016). In this case,

P10 uses Turkishness as an umbrella identity when meeting the common “other.” He aligns himself with the majority outgroup while meeting an outsider. This could be due to that the existence of the common other is irrelevant for his identity and his ingroup’s relations with the majority outgroup.

### 3.2.2.2 Relative Deprivation and Perceived Discrimination

In the Study I, the hypothesis was that Kurds would perceive themselves as a relative majority group when meeting Syrians, who are a lower-status group than Kurds in Turkey. Therefore, they would not report relative deprivation or perceived discrimination. In this study, I found out about different perspectives, yet most of the answers supported the hypothesis and the results of the previous study. Empathy seems to be a prevalent emotion among Kurds while approaching to Syrian refugees. P7 thinks that Syrians are in a worse condition in every possible field than Kurds. She said:

“Kurds, at least, do not have a language barrier. They have rights, they are aware of their rights. I know that Syrians are exploited a lot. They are employed on lowest wages and uninsured. We cannot even compare Kurds with Syrians in this sense. Yes, before Syrians arrived, Kurds were used to employed for low-paid-jobs. However, after Syrians, we have realized that those low salaries were pretty high.”

Likewise, P6 reported that *“Here we have the environment and conditions to keep food on the table. But I think Syrians are exploited because they are outsiders. They are both economically and socially discriminated against.”* P9, similarly, did not show any sign of relative deprivation or perceived discrimination and indicated that *“As a Kurd, I don’t feel like a detached individual. I can enjoy every opportunity that the state provides. I believe that Syrians feel marginalized in the society.”* P1, found a comparison among Kurds and Syrians with regard to social and economic rights vain. She said:

“Even though Kurds stay in the background, they are citizens of Turkey. I am not sure if it is OK to compare because they are refugees, and we are citizens. Of course, we do not have equal rights. Kurds at least, for better or worse, have the right to vote and be represented. I wish we

treated Syrians as humans regardless of their refugee status.”

In line with the previous study, some participants did not show relative deprivation after imagining a contact with a Syrian refugee. Nevertheless, other participants reported relative deprivation. P2, although empathizing with Syrians’ leaving homeland experience, said that *“I am in business for the last 10 years and I don’t make money as much as they do. They don’t pay taxes and live in a luxury that I don’t have.”* Also, P4 reported that her 14 years old students complain about the Arabic signs in Ağrı saying that *“There are no Kurdish sign, but there are Arabic signs everywhere for Syrians.”* P4 commented that *“This is what their parents talk about at home. Not only Kurds, but the whole country, think that our economy was super before Syrians arrived; now we are bankrupting because of them. Syrians have become the scapegoats.”*

It is challenging to explain what actually causes Kurds to feel relative deprivation with regard to Syrians. They could be tagging along with the majority, the Turkish society, in believing Syrians are positively discriminated and given certain rights (e.g., exemption from taxes, receiving state-sponsored aids etc.) by the state, and feel deprived. In other words, the relative deprivation they feel may not be caused by their minority status, rather they feel deprived against Syrians just like a Turk would. They could be approaching to the matter as a citizen of Turkey, not as a Kurd. If it is because of their minority status, then it could be because of distinctiveness threat they feel from Syrians. In this case, Kurds might feel threatened by the presence of a rival minority group and develop a sense of deprivation due to the state’s services Kurds do not receive but believe that Syrians do. P2’s reaction seems much more like about the former, while the reaction of P4’s is about the latter explanation.

On the matter of perceived discrimination, I can tell that none of the participants felt like discriminated against by Syrians, on the contrary, they agreed that Syrians are highly discriminated against in Turkey. P3 reported that *“Syrians are more disadvantaged than Kurds in terms of discrimination.”* P10, lives in Ceylanpınar (a province of Şanlıurfa) where most of the Syrians there are of Kurdish origin, said that *“In Ceylanpınar and surrounding provinces, discrimination against Syrians is not as prevalent as in the big cities, due to kinships with the Kurdish Syrian refugees that goes back to decades ago.”* Yet, he added that *“Kurds are much more welcomed in Turkish society compared to Syrians. Among a Syrian and Turkish Kurd, Turkish one would be preferred.”* Some interviewees pointed out that the discrimination towards Kurds has been redirected toward Syrians for the last decade, and Kurds have tagged along with the discriminating Syrians trend. P4 said that:

“10 years ago, we were the target (of discrimination), now it is Syrians. Both Turks and Kurds are targeting them. I am very mad (at Kurds). You have been marginalized for years; how do you do the same to the women and children who fled the war and sought refuge in our country?”

P1 explained why Kurds discriminating Syrians as “*They have forgotten what they lived through. Maybe this is how we are coping with the pain of the past. Maybe we are feeling free this way.*”. Likewise, P4 reported the possibility that this could be about Kurds’ subconsciousness. According to her, after being oppressed for a long time, Kurds might be wondering how it feels like to be the oppressor.

According to these statements, the reason why Kurds do not feel discriminated, on the contrary, discriminate against Syrians is that they perceive themselves as the majority in relation to Syrians. Since the only role-model of majority for Kurds is the Turkish majority, therefore, they do what they have learned from them. Yet, this could be explained too, simply following the trend in the society in discriminating or maltreating the Syrians.

### **3.2.3 Comparing Imagined Scenarios and Outgroup Attitudes**

In the third stage, participants were asked to compare the two interactions they have imagined. This part is particularly interesting because of the choices and explanations interviewees have made. Sometimes they have said the ethnicity would not matter, sometimes they preferred the Turk but conditionally. The overall answers of participants can be found briefly in Table 3.1.

When they were asked in which environment they have felt more comfortable, those who preferred the one with a Turk reported similar reasons such as having a common history and education, being together for a long time, having a lot of friends and acquaintances, speaking the same language and having much more in common to talk about. P7 said that:

“If the person in front of me sees us as equal and think that we have a proper conversation, I would feel comfortable in both environment. If s/he looks down on me, I would be tense in that environment. It is about people themselves, not about their ethnicities.”

P9, on the other hand, approached to the question from a different angle saying that *“Having a conversation with a Turk is a routine for me. If we do not have language barrier, I can chat with a Syrian just like with a Turk. Ethnicity would not be a determinant, but the intimacy we develop would be.”*

Some participants focused on why they would feel uncomfortable in one of the imagined environments. P2 preferred the Turk, yet he said that he would feel uncomfortable if he feels discriminated against. P8 explained why she would not feel comfortable with a Syrian by saying that *“I can only understand the mood of the person in front of me, not what s/he says. Translation does not truly find its meaning. Also, I would be saddened by the despair of the Syrian I am talking to.”*

P2 and P7 pointed out the importance of attitudes. Although P7 did not specifically indicate the ethnicity, it was a high chance that she thought about a Turk when using the phrase *“looking down on me”* since Syrian refugees are barely in a position to look down on a Turkish citizen due to their relative status in the society. For similar reasons, P4 felt more comfortable during her conversation with a Syrian, saying that:

*“When I talked to a Turk, I am the guest, and s/he is the host. When you are a guest, you would not feel comfortable. While I am talking to a Syrian, I am the host. I would be more comfortable.”*

P3, on the other hand, explained the reason why she feels more comfortable with a Syrian by saying that:

*“When I talked to a Turk, I would try to prove myself: I am Kurd, but I am like this, I am a Kurd, but I have all facilities available, I am a Kurd, but my family is like that. I would constantly try to break down the labels. When I imagine talking to a Syrian, I don’t feel that kind of anxiety. I don’t pay an effort to get myself welcomed.”*

Table 3.2 Comparative Answers

<b>Participants</b>	<b>More comfortable with</b>	<b>Would like to meet again</b>	<b>Have more in common</b>
P1	Turk	Turk	Turk/Syrian (only cultural)
P2	Turk	Turk	Syrian
P3	Syrian	Turk or Syrian (depending on the attitudes of the Turk)	Syrian
P4	Syrian	Turk	Both
P5	Turk	Both	Turk
P6	Turk	Both	Turk
P7	Depends on the attitudes	Depends on the attitudes	Turk
P8	Turk	Both	Depends on the conversation
P9	Depends on the level of intimacy achieved	Depends on the level of intimacy achieved	Turk
P10	Turk	Both	Turk

P4 explained her status when facing a Turk with the “guest” metaphor, while P3 talked about “being welcomed”. Accordingly, both participants, actually, reported intergroup anxiety towards Kurds. Study I did not control for intergroup anxiety, yet previous research showed that reduced anxiety is a sort of catalyst for positive contact (e.g., Crisp et al. 2011). As Study I did not check for intergroup anxiety, it might be one of the reasons why contact did not have overall effect on the dependent variables.

When participants were asked the questions of “Which group do you have more positive attitudes towards? Which of these two people you were chatting with would you like to meet again?”, all of them had focused on the second question. Six of the participants said that they would meet both the Turk and the Syrian; ethnicity would not matter. Only, P9 made a reservation on language barrier, while P7 reported that it is all about attitudes of the person towards her. Three participants

preferred to meet the Turk again, instead of the Syrian. Among those, P4 said that:

“After we get to know each other, I think I can break down her/his prejudices. Although s/he marginalizes me, after getting me really know, I think her/his perceptions on Kurds will change. Also, we have a common cultural and historical heritage. Therefore, I think, we have much more to share. Maybe only to change the incorrect perception and stereotypes, I would prefer to meet the Turk.”

P3, on the other hand, reported that *“If I feel that s/he approaches me without any prejudice, I will prefer to meet the Turk. But, if the Turk does not accept me as I am, if I cannot trust her/him and feel the urge to explain myself, I would definitely prefer the Syrian to meet again.”*

Reservations made on the attitudes by the interviewees support the presence of Kurd’s perceived discrimination. Also, P3 and P4’s references to getting accepted and breaking out the prejudice are consistent with what was found in Study I’s additional analysis that Kurd’s contact with the majority Turks is related to feelings of acceptance.

On the question of with which group they think they have more in common, six participants said "Turks" and all of them referred to living together for a very long time. Some pointed out to the shared history and education, others highlighted the common lifestyle and worldview. P4 indicated that they have a lot in common both with Turks and Syrians. She said, with Turks, apart from common language, history, geography, and education “We are living in the same country, we follow the same celebrities, we read the same trending books and even name our children with the trending names.” On the other hand, she reported that Kurds and Syrians are both marginalized and seen as guests. She said that “They are also seen as Syrians first, not as human beings. A Kurd is also viewed as a Kurd, not as a human being.” P3, likewise, reported that Kurds and Syrians share the psychology of getting themselves accepted. Others who think that they share more in common with Syrians, referenced to culture and traditions. P2 and P4 both referred to family, while P3 referred to both family and culture, including cuisine.

Those who reported more commonality with Turks highlighted the time spent together in the same country and exposing to the same daily agenda, while others who reported more in common with Syrians referred to culture and traditions. Only P3 and P4, both living in Eastern cities, emphasized the feelings of getting accepted and

being marginalized, which could be easily considered as part of relative deprivation and perceived discrimination.

### 3.3 Discussion

Conducting a qualitative imagined contact study clarified certain points that are left vague in the previous quantitative study, while it also let us to reconsider the explanations made about the results of the previous study. For instance, in Study I, contact with the minority Syrians was associated with increased ingroup identification. According to the Hypothesis 1B, this result was expected due to the possible distinctiveness threat Kurds may feel after engaging with a perceived rival outgroup. In Study II, only two participants expressed increased ingroup identification after imagining contact with a Syrian, and their answers were not related to distinctiveness threat. Although this does not mean that distinctiveness is not a potential explanatory mechanism; it is possible that participants' awareness of distinctiveness threat was not high during the interviews. On the other hand, in Study I, contact had an overall effect on ingroup identification, yet no significant difference was found between majority contact condition with other conditions in contrary to the Hypothesis 1A. In Study II, however, participants' ethnic identities seemed to be more salient after contact, a finding that has been observed in other imagined contact studies among Kurds (e.g., Bagci, Stathi, and Piyale 2019a). As such, most of the participants made reservations such as "if s/he treats me as if s/he is superior" and "if I don't feel marginalized."

During interviews, participants answered the questions about relative deprivation and perceived discrimination not according to how they feel during the imagined contact, but mostly reported their general perceptions. Therefore, it provided us with background information. For instance, in Study I's additional analysis, interaction of home city and condition had an approached significance on perceived discrimination where majority contact in Western cities was associated with higher perceived discrimination compared to control condition. On the other hand, during interviews, participants from Eastern cities showed greater perceived discrimination while the Westerner Kurds talked more about discrimination experiences and revealed less ingroup identification. Although two results seem inconsistent, in Study II, Kurds from Eastern cities talked about infrastructure and other services provided by the state, while Kurds from Western cities talked about discrimination experiences at

the interpersonal level. Therefore, two studies actually shed light on different kinds of perceived discrimination reflecting both state-society and interpersonal levels.

Study II also revealed that Kurds are quite empathetic towards Syrians. This result was consistent with Study I's result on outgroup attitudes that in minority condition, Kurds evaluated both ingroup and two outgroups positively. Also, only minority contact had an approached significance on attitudes towards the relevant, Syrian, outgroup. On the other hand, in the first study, Kurds in the majority condition evaluated Syrians more negative and this result was supported in Study II that Kurds tend to align themselves with the majority Turks or perceive themselves as the majority temporarily when engaging with Syrians.

Study I's additional analysis revealing the effect of majority contact condition on self-esteem and feelings, also found its shape in Study II where participants indicated how they wanted to be accepted by Turks and prove themselves to Turks and especially preferred meeting the Turkish outgroup member again rather than the Syrian outgroup member, only to break her/his prejudice even if s/he marginalized her (P4).

Study II as a qualitative study revealed diverse results and different perspectives on the variables of Study I and provided us with background information to understand Study I's result better. It also contributed to the literature by suggesting an additional method, if not an alternative. Apparently, it had limitations as well as Study I. Limitations of both studies and future research prospects are discussed in the next chapter.

## 4. CONCLUSION

Turkey is a country where several ethnic groups live together and also receives many immigrants and refugees. While Kurds consist almost a quarter of the total population, with the civil war breaking out in Syria, Syrian refugees who fled from the war have become a very large minority group in Turkey, in fact quickly becoming the second largest one after Kurds. Over the years, due to the long history of conflict between Turks and Kurds, the relationship of these two groups have been examined academically by numerous researchers from different fields, including political science, conflict resolution, sociology and social psychology. On the other hand, the Syrian presence in Turkey is novel and has been observed only for the last 10 years. Therefore, the studies conducted on Syrians focused either on Turk-Syrian relationship (e.g, Firat and Ataca 2020; Turk et al. 2019) or Syrians' integration and adaptation to the Turkish culture (e.g, Bagci and Canpolat 2019). Thus, Kurdish-Syrian relationship has been ignored except two studies mentioned in the previous chapters. This study, not only focused on Kurdish-Syrian relationship but also compared it with the Turkish-Kurdish relationship.

The choice of target groups is not the only aspect of this study that differs it from others. Among intergroup contact studies, focusing on a minority group is rare, since contact is known to be more effective for majority status groups (Tropp and Pettigrew 2005). While even less studies focus on interminority contact, among imagined contact studies, this study is the first one to examine a minority group's contact with another minority group.

Another aspect that makes this study unique that it utilized both quantitative and qualitative methods. Previous imagined contact studies have been conducted with only quantitative methods, while research that used qualitative methods only analyzed participants' descriptions of the imagined contact qualitatively. On the other hand, this research, in addition to the quantitative study, included a qualitative imagined contact study from scratch.

All the above-mentioned aspects that make this research unique contributed to lim-

itations of the research as well. First of all, choosing a minority group as the target group of the study decreases the chance of reaching a high sample size for two reasons: they are few in number among the total population, and they are either less willing to participate in a study about Kurds or less likely to indicate their ethnic background correctly. In fact, in Study I, the online survey was advertised through social media and 241 people filled the demographics, while only 108 of them continued with the further sections of the survey including more sensitive questions about ethnicity. In the demographics, 128 people indicated that they are Turkish, but among those, there were quite a number of people who reported that they are either living or were born in an Eastern city where the population of Turks is very low. Therefore, choosing a minority group categorically prevented us from reaching higher numbers of participants. Ultimately, the fewer participants mean the less external validity of the research and certainly lower generalizability.

At the same time, the choice of the minority target outgroup might be another limitation. Syrians are a newly emerging group that were thought to be temporary asylum-seekers in the beginning of the immigration process, but as the time passed, people have become more and more concerned that they will be permanent residents. Choosing such a group towards whom hostility has intensified lately might have affected the result of the study. Besides, due to their refugee status, they are not equal to Kurds who are actual citizens of Turkey. Thus, where the relationship between the Turks and Kurds was based on ethnic relationships, the relationship between Kurds and Syrians represents a native vs. refugee relationship and involves more variability across groups such as citizenship, language, etc. Even a participant in Study II was annoyed with the idea of comparing Kurds with Syrians. The status difference between two minority groups constitutes, therefore, another limitation for this research.

Considering the results of both studies, the study has another status-wise limitation. The way Kurds perceived themselves as a part of the majority Turkish compared to Syrians might trigger the question whether Kurdish-Syrian context is an interminority context per se. The initial approach considered the Kurdish-Syrian context only in the sense of population sizes of each group. In this regard, it is an interminority context. Yet the status of Syrians led Kurdish participants to feel more like a part of the majority hence, made the context look like a majority-minority contact.

Also, this study focused on Syrian refugees in general without differentiating between Syrian Turkmens, Kurds and Arabs. Although Syria, just like Turkey, has ethnic diversity including religious sects, it is found to be too complex to introduce such diversity in the research. Focusing merely on one of the Syrian ethnic group is also

found to be very restrictive for a study that examines already a minority group that is small in number. Therefore, disregarding different Syrian ethnic backgrounds is one of the limitations of this study as well. As such, it might have been interesting to assess Turkish Kurds' attitudes towards Syrian Kurdish refugees and whether 'Kurdishness' constituted a common ingroup identity.

Another limitation is the lack of previous interminority imagined contact studies to set an example and to provide a ground for comparison. Similarly, conducting a qualitative imagined contact study without prior example was challenging too. The applicability of the qualitative method, in and on itself, for contact studies is questionable, since the semi-structured interviews, from time to time, divert both the interviewee and the interviewer from what was actually asked. In Study II, for instance, participants did not answer some of the questions specifically thinking about the contact they have imagined, rather they talked about the situation in general. This, although provided us with background information, has limited our capacity to compare both studies. Still, this study is likely to set an example for future studies.

Despite all the above-mentioned limitations, this research has certain outcomes that contribute to the imagined contact literature. Accordingly, the study revealed that interminority imagined contact increased ingroup identification and seemed to improve outgroup attitudes towards the relevant minority group (only approaching significance levels). Attitudes towards all groups, including the ingroup, were higher in minority contact condition. The expressed empathy towards Syrians in the second study led us to consider that the higher scores in minority contact might have been explained by the feelings of empathy. Imagined contact with the majority outgroup, on the other hand, did not have any significant effect on ingroup identification, outgroup attitudes, relative deprivation, and perceived discrimination. However, additional analyses revealed that imagined contact with the majority is associated with more positive emotions (significant effect) and higher levels of self-esteem (approached significance), which could possibly be explained by feelings of acceptance. This explanation was supported with Study II where participants reported their demand for getting accepted by Turks. Also, Kurds in the majority contact condition evaluated Syrians the least favourably. This outcome, too, was consistent with Study II where participants reported how they feel much more of a Turk rather than a Kurd while talking to a Syrian or any other foreigner. This statement partly validated the Hypotheses 3B and 4B of Study I that assumed Kurds to temporarily perceive themselves as the majority in the presence of a Syrian.

Future imagined contact research can consider focusing on contact across different

interminority contexts, which is a very important gap in the literature. Conducting a qualitative research can be considered to provide background information, if not as an alternative for quantitative research. Yet, a more structured and face-to-face interviews would be suggested. Also, for quantitative research that will focus on minority status group members, conducting the research in a laboratory environment or conducting qualitative analysis of the imagined contact descriptions might be better options to make sure that participants actually imagine what they were asked.

This study is part of the endeavor to find ways to improve intergroup relations in Turkey, where Turks and Kurds has been suffering for over decades under ongoing conflict. During the last decade, Syrians have participated in the suffering trend for different reasons, yet the main problem is common. Intergroup relations in Turkey suffer from miscommunication and perceived discrimination. Positive intergroup contact can be a solution, however, in daily life, the contact among these three groups is not always as positive as demanded. Therefore, through imagined contact, this study aimed to stimulate participants to engage in a structured, positive contact with the outgroups. It succeeded to some extent, yet not as much as expected. Moreover, the long-term implications and the applicability of the study for larger samples is unknown. In light of the current research, it is suggested that imagined contact should be considered as introductory for 'actual contact' and should be supported by direct contact interventions for possible long term effects.

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# APPENDIX A



## Sabancı University Research Ethics Council (SUREC)

**Date:** December 2019

**To:** Sabahat Çiğdem BAĞCI / Principal Investigator; Afife Serra TÜMER- MA Student / Co-Investigator

**From:** Prof. Mehmet Yıldız, Chair of the Research Ethics Committee

**Protocol Number:** FASS-2019-80

**Protocol Name:** Imagined contact among minority group members: A comparison of majority and interminority contact

**Subject:** SUREC Approval

**Official Approval Date:** February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Sabancı University Research Ethics Council has approved the above named and numbered protocol through expedited review. You are responsible for promptly reporting to the SUREC:

- any severe adverse effects
- any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others;
- any proposed changes in the research activity

Enclosed you can find the below noted approved documents.

Protocol Application

Informed Consent Form

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me via phone at 216-483 9010 or via e-mail at

Best Regards,

Prof. Mehmet Yıldız  
Chair of the Ethics Committee

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FRG-A410-01-03

**SABANCI UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COUNCIL  
APPLICATION FOR RESEARCH STUDY**

<b>For SUREC Use Only</b>	
Protocol No: <b>FASS-2019-80</b>	Approval Date: February 5 <sup>th</sup> , 2020
Modification Requested Date:	Modification Approval Date:

1. **Title:** Imagined contact among minority group members: A comparison of majority and interminority contact
2. **Principal Investigator(s)** (The Principal Investigator must be a faculty member or equivalent); **Co-Investigator (s)** (The Co-Investigator must be Master's or Phd Student)

<b>Principal Investigator</b> Sabahat Çiğdem BAĞCI / Thesis Advisor - FASS		
<b>Co-Investigator</b> Afife Serra TÜMER / MA Student		

Note: This application must be submitted by the Principal Investigator, who assumes full responsibility for compliance with this research study.

**3. Programme:**

Conflict Analysis and Resolution - MA Thesis

Please answer all questions below:

4. **Will this be funded by an external sponsor?** Yes No

If yes, list sponsor/funding agency:  
Proposal Number:

**5. Proposed Start Date** (actual date may not precede SUREC approval date)

January 2019 (as soon as the ethics process finalized)

**6. Describe the purpose of the research**

Contact hypothesis was introduced to the literature by Allport in 1954. Allport suggested that prejudice among the members of opposing groups can be reduced by contact under four conditions: cooperation, common goal, equal status and institutional support (Allport, 1954). Throughout years, Allport's contact theory has been researched extensively in the field of social psychology and conflict studies. Later research showed that without Allport's four conditions contact still reduced prejudice (Tolsma, Lubbers, Coenders, 2008; Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005).

Crisp and Turner (2009) further developed the contact theory by following the research showing that imagining a social situation results in the same effect as the real experience. Crisp and Turner (2009) suggests that imagining a positive contact situation can produce more positive perception of outgroups. Crisp and Turner's study paved the way for contact research where opportunities of actual contact is unlikely or impractical if not absent.

In the current literature, contact between majority and minority has been studied extensively. Among majority-minority relations, research showed that contact effect is asymmetrical in the sense that it is stronger for majorities while weaker for minorities

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(Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005; Bikmen, 2011). Research on minority-minority contact is very limited, whereas interminority imagined contact is almost absent. With this study we will try to fill a gap in the literature and provide a test that can be applied to different minority groups

The objectives of the proposed research program can be outlined as follows:

- Testing imagined contact theory on Kurds' relations with Turks and Syrian refugees.
- Comparing a minority group's (Kurds) perception of a majority group and another minority group (Syrians) through imagined positive contact.
- Measuring differences in levels of in-group identification, outgroup attitudes, perceived discrimination, social comparison and relative deprivation.
- Contributing to the literature with a new research that is applicable to different groups around the world for both minority-majority imagined contact and inter-minority imagined contact (which is pretty much understudied).

As the result of this study, we expect that the contact with a minority group member will lead to higher collective self-esteem and lower relative deprivation and discrimination that will result in more positive feelings. On the other hand, the contact with the majority will lead to a lower level of collective self-esteem, increased relative deprivation and perceived discrimination that will result in more negative feelings.

#### **7. Describe procedures to be used and any associated risks or discomforts.**

Procedures should be specific and listed step by step.

A total of 180 Kurds will be recruited online and randomly divided into three groups (60 in each cases).

First, the participants will fill out demographic forms (see appendices). The first group will be the control group and will be asked to imagine that they are hiking in a beautiful weather (adapted from Bagci & et al., 2019). The second group will be asked to imagine a positive contact (imagine that you had a nice talk with a Turk in a café that you go to everyday) with a Turk (majority contact, Bagci et al., 2018):

"Please imagine for two minutes that you are in a café where you go often. There sits a Syrian who you do not recognize. You chat with the Syrian for 20-30 minutes. After the Syrian you've met left, you think that the conversation was delightful and interesting. Please think about the details about the conversation"

The third group (interminority contact) will be asked to imagine the same positive scenario where they meet with a Syrian.

After the manipulations, we will measure their levels of in-group identification, outgroup attitudes, perceived discrimination, social comparison, relative deprivation and perception of Turks and Syrians (see Appendices for the measures).

The procedure involves the administration of online surveys via convenience sampling with social media tools (email, Facebook groups, etc.) and snowball sampling. The completion of the total questionnaire would take 20-30 minutes. At the beginning of the study, participants would receive online consent forms and would be asked to tick a box confirming their voluntary participation. Participants would be reminded that they could end their participation whenever they felt uncomfortable.

The present study does not involve any predictable major risk or discomfort. However, there is a minor risk potential of participants' feeling uncomfortable when completing items related to ingroup identification, discrimination experiences and social comparison. Under this circumstance, participants are able to withdraw any time from the study and ask for the removal of their data from the data pool.

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Data collected would be kept confidential and would be used for only academic purposes (research papers, conference presentations, etc.). As the data would be collected online, the co-investigator would be responsible for keeping copies of the online data for a minimum period of three years (mostly required by scientific journals). Moreover, the anonymous data would be uploaded at an online repository (if asked by the journal). This procedure is encouraged (and sometimes requested by highly prestigious social psychology journals), because of the increasing 'Open Science' tradition and the ethics of transparency in the psychology literature. However, we may choose to upload the data without demographic information, which will provide more anonymity.

**8. Describe in detail any safeguards to minimize risks or discomforts, including any measures to render the data anonymous (you will not know the identity of the research subject) or confidential (subjects' identity or personal identifying information will not be disclosed).**

The informed consent form presented at the beginning of the study will state that the study is completely anonymous, therefore participants would not be required to report any identifying information such as names, other than participation numbers. Participants will be also reminded that data collected would be kept confidential and used only for academic purposes (such as academic papers).

**9. Describe any financial compensation or other potential benefits to the subjects associated with this research activity.**

Participants will not receive any payment for participation.

**10. Does the proposed human subject research pose a financial conflict of interest to the PI.**  Yes  No If yes, please explain.

**11. Is the consent form attached?**  Yes  No If no, please justify the need to waive this requirement. (If subjects under the age of 18 are to participate in the study, a parental consent form will also be required.)

**12. Benefits and Risks: Do the potential benefits to the subjects and/or the anticipated gain in research knowledge outweigh the risks to the subjects?**

The participants will not be asked for their names. Their data will be kept anonymous and confidential. They also have the right to leave research any time they want. While there is almost no risk, the research will provide the literature with a new area of analysis with regard to interminority imagined contact, which is a very understudied area.

**13. If another institution(s) is involved in the proposed research, please list each institution, the protocol number, and SUREC approval date.**  Yes  No

**14. After reviewing the University Research Ethics Council Instruction**

<http://mysu.sabanciuniv.edu/surecharitasi/tr/yonerger/irg-a410-02>

**I believe this protocol to be:**

Exempt from further SUREC review  Expedited  Full Council review required.

**Applicants Signature**

FRG-A410-01-03

**For SUREC Use Only**

Protocol No: **FASS-2019-80**  
Modification Requested Date:

Approval Date: February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020  
Modification Approval Date:

**Title:** Imagined contact among minority group members: A comparison of majority and interminority contact

**Principal Investigator:** Sabahat Çiğdem BAĞCI / Thesis Advisor - FASS

**Co-Investigator:** Afife Serra TÜMER / MA Student

**THIS SPACE FOR SUREC USE ONLY**

- The protocol has been determined to be exempt from SUREC review in accordance with Sabancı University Research Ethics Council procedure.
- The protocol has been approved through expedited review in accordance with Sabancı University Research Ethics Council procedure.
- The Institutional Review Board has been approved the protocol through full review in accordance with Sabancı University Research Ethics Council procedure.

**APPROVED BY THE SABANCI UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COUNCIL**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Prof. Mehmet Yıldız  
SUREC Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Prof. Arzu S. Wasti  
SUREC Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Assist. Prof. Asuman Büyükcın Tetik  
SUREC Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Prof. Cengiz Kaya  
SUREC Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Assist. Prof. Nedim Nomer  
SUREC Member

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Assist. Prof. Oğün Adebali  
SUREC Member

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Prof. Zafer Gedik  
SUREC Member

FRG-A410-01-03

## KATILIMCI BİLGİLENDİRME FORMU

Değerli Katılımcı,

Sizi katılmaya davet ettiğimiz bu araştırmada Türkiye'de gruplar arası iletişim ve değişimlere bakılacaktır. Bu araştırma Sabancı Üniversitesi Sanat ve Sosyal Bilimler Fakültesi Öğretim Üyesi Doç. Dr. Sabahat Çiğdem Bağcı danışmanlığında, Uyuşmazlık Analizi ve Çözümü Yüksek Lisans öğrencisi Afife Sera Tümer tarafından yürütülmektedir.

Deneye katılımınız gönüllüdür. Sorulara açık yüreklilikle yanıt vermeniz beklenmektedir. Sizden aldığımız yanıtlar gizli tutulacak, isim kullanılmayacak ve sadece akademik amaçlı değerlendirilecektir. Araştırmaya katıldıktan sonra, anketin herhangi bir anında kendinizi kötü hissetmeniz durumunda araştırmadan çekilmekte tamamen özgürsünüz. Anket 20-30 dakika sürecek olup, ankete katılımınızdan dolayı herhangi bir finansal karşılık almayacaksınız.

Eğer araştırmanın amacı ile ilgili verilen bu bilgiler dışında şimdi veya araştırmanın herhangi bir aşamasında daha fazla bilgiye ihtiyaç duyarsanız araştırmacıya e-posta adresinden veya numaralı telefondan ulaşabilirsiniz. Eğer çalışma sırasında herhangi bir şekilde hak ihlaline uğradığımızı düşünüyorsanız lütfen Sabancı Üniversitesi Araştırma Etik Kurulu Başkanı Prof. Dr. Mehmet Yıldız'a : adresinden e-postayla veya numaralı telefondan ulaşınız.

Katılımınız için şimdiden çok teşekkür ederiz.

\* 1. Yukarıda yazılanları okudum ve araştırmaya katılmayı kabul ediyorum.

Onaylıyorum

Onaylamıyorum

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## PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Dear Participant,

The research you are invited to participate aims to study intergroup contact and changes in Turkey. The study is conducted by Sabancı University Conflict Analysis and Resolution MA student Afife Serra Tümer, under the supervision of Assoc. Prof. Sabahat Çiğdem Bağcı, faculty member of Sabancı University Faculty of Art and Social Sciences.

Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. You are expected to answer questions honestly. Your name will not be asked or used, the answers you will give will be kept confidential, and will be used only for academic purposes. After you have participated the study, you are free to stop and leave the study anytime. The survey is expected to take 20-30 minutes. You will not receive any financial compensation for your participation.

If you have any question about the purpose of the study, you can get contact with the researcher by e-mail at \_\_\_\_\_ or by phone at \_\_\_\_\_ you believe that your rights have been violated in any way, please contact Prof. Mehmet Yıldız, Chair of the Research Ethics Committee of Sabancı University at \_\_\_\_\_ or by email at \_\_\_\_\_

Thanks for your participation.

\*I have read above and I accept to participate to the study.

- I approve  
 I don't approve

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### Anket Soruları

1. Yaşınız? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Mesleğiniz? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Cinsiyetiniz?

-Kadın

-Erkek

-Diğer

4. Hepimiz Türkiye Cumhuriyeti vatandaşsınız fakat farklı etnik kökenlerden olabiliriz.

Siz kendinizi, kimliğinizi ne olarak hissediyorsunuz?

- Türk - Kürt -Diğer

5. Hangi şehirde doğdunuz? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Hangi şehirde yaşıyorsunuz? \_\_\_\_\_

7. Genel olarak gelir durumunuzun nasıl olduğunu düşünüyorsunuz?

1- Oldukça düşük      2      3      4      5      6      7-Oldukça yüksek

Bir sonraki sayfada sizden bir durumu hayal etmeniz istenecektir. Lütfen yönergeyi dikkatlice okuyunuz.

8A. Lütfen iki dakika boyunca bir doğa yürüyüşüne çıktığınızı hayal edin. Lütfen bu geziyle ilgili hayal ettiğiniz detayları ve ne gördüğünüzü (nasıl bir yerdesiniz, kimlerlesiniz, etrafınızda neler var gibi) ayrıntılı bir şekilde düşünün.

8B. Lütfen iki dakika boyunca haftanın herhangi bir gününde sıklıkla gittiğiniz bir kafede oturduğunuzu hayal edin. Yanınızda tanımadığınız Suriyeli bir kişi oturuyor ve 20-30 dakika boyunca sohbet ediyorsunuz. Tanıştığınız kişi yanınızdan ayrıldıktan sonra konuşmanızın ne kadar keyifli ve ilginç geçtiğini düşünüyorsunuz. Lütfen bu konuşmanın detaylarını düşünün.

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**8C. Lütfen iki dakika boyunca haftanın herhangi bir gününde sıklıkla gittiğiniz bir kafede oturduğunuzu hayal edin. Yanınızda tanımadığınız Türk bir kişi oturuyor ve 20-30 dakika boyunca sohbet ediyorsunuz. Tanıştığınız kişi yanınızdan ayrıldıktan sonra konuşmanızın ne kadar keyifli ve ilginç geçtiğini düşünüyorsunuz. Lütfen bu konuşmanın detaylarını düşünün.**

Şimdi bu detayları 6-7 cümle ile anlatın.

**9. Hayalinizde canlandırdığımız durum ne kadar ilgi çekiciydi?**

1- Hiç ilgi çekici değildi 2 3 4- Nötr 5 6 7-Çok ilgi çekiciydi

**10. Hayal ettiğiniz durumu kafanızda canlandırmak ne kadar zordu?**

1- Hiç zor değildi 2 3 4- Ne kolaydı, ne zordu 5 6 7-Çok zordu

**11. Hayal ettiğiniz durumu nasıl değerlendirirsiniz?**

1. Son derece olumsuz 2- Oldukça olumsuz 3- Biraz olumsuz 4- Ne olumlu, ne olumsuz 5- Biraz olumlu 6- Oldukça olumlu 7- Son derece olumlu

**12. Lütfen aşağıdaki sorulara ne derece katıldığınızı işaretleyiniz. Soruları kendi etnik grubunuzu düşünerek yanıtlamanız gerekmektedir.**

(1 = Kesinlikle katılmıyorum, 4 = Ne katılıyorum, ne katılmıyorum, 7 = Kesinlikle katılıyorum)

-Etnik grubumun tarihi, örf ve adetleri hakkında bilgi edinmek için zaman harcarım.

-Etnik grubuma ait olduğumu hissedirim.

-Etnik grubuma ait olmanın ne anlama geldiğini gayet iyi anlarım.

-Etnik grubumu daha iyi anlamak için elimden geleni yaparım.

-Etnik grubumla ilgili daha fazla şey öğrenmek için diğer insanlarla konuşurum.

-Etnik grubuma güçlü bir bağlılık hissedirim.

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**13. Genel olarak aşağıdaki ifadelere ne derece katıldığınızı işaretleyiniz.**

(1 = Kesinlikle katılmıyorum, 4 = Ne katılıyorum, ne katılmıyorum, 7 = Kesinlikle katılıyorum)

- Diğer gruplar genel olarak Kürtlerin iyi olduğunu düşünürler.
- Çoğu grup, genel olarak Kürtleri diğer gruplara göre daha etkisiz görür.
- Diğer gruplar genellikle Kürtlere saygı duyarlar.
- Diğer gruplar genel olarak Kürtlerin değersiz olduğunu düşünürler.

**14. Aşağıdaki sorular, kişisel ya da grup olarak etnik kimliğiniz ile ilgili ne derece ayrımcılık hissettiğiniz ile ilgilidir. Lütfen size en uygun şıkkı işaretleyiniz.**

(1 = Kesinlikle katılmıyorum, 4 = Ne katılıyorum, ne katılmıyorum, 7 = Kesinlikle katılıyorum)

- Türkiye’de, kişisel olarak, etnik kimliğiniz ile ilgili ne sıklıkta ayrımcılığa uğradığınızı düşünüyorsunuz? (1)
- Türkiye’de, kendinizi ait hissettiğiniz etnik grup üyelerinin, ne sıklıkta ayrımcılığa uğradığınızı düşünüyorsunuz? (2)

**15. Aşağıdaki ifadelere bakarak size doğru gelen şıkkı işaretleyiniz.**

(1 = Oldukça dezavantajlı, 4 = Eşit, 7 = Oldukça avantajlı)

- Ekonomik haklar açısından düşündüğünüzde, etnik grubunuz Türkiye’de diğer gruplara göre ne konumdadır? (1)
- Sosyal haklar açısından düşündüğünüzde, etnik grubunuz Türkiye’de ne konumdadır? (2)

**16. Lütfen aşağıdaki maddelerle ilgili görüşlerinizi belirtiniz.**

(1 = Kesinlikle katılmıyorum, 4 = Ne katılıyorum, ne katılmıyorum, 7 = Kesinlikle katılıyorum)

- Kendimi en az diğer insanlar kadar değerli buluyorum. (1)
- Bazı olumlu özelliklerim olduğunu düşünüyorum. (2)
- Genelde kendimi başarısız bir kişi olarak görme eğilimindeyim. (3)
- Ben de diğer insanların birçoğunun yapabildiği kadar bir şeyler yapabilirim. (4)

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- Kendimde gurur duyacak fazla bir şey bulamıyorum. (5)
- Kendime karşı olumlu bir tutum içindeyim. (6)
- Genel olarak kendimden memnunum. (7)
- Kendime karşı daha fazla daygı duyabilmeyi isterdim. (8)
- Bazen çok fazla işe yaramadığımı düşünüyorum. (9)
- Bazen kendimin hiç de yeterli bir insan olmadığını düşünüyorum. (10)

**17. Lütfen şu an nasıl hissettiğinizi düşünün. Aşağıdaki ifadeler için, 1'den 7'ye kadar bir sayı belirleyip cevaplayın.**

*(1=Kesinlikle hayır, 4=Ne evet, ne hayır, 7=Kesinlikle Evet)*

Olumlu, Olumsuz, İyi, Kötü, Keyifli, Keyifsiz, Mutlu, Üzgün, Korkmuş, Neşeli, Kızgın,  
Memnun

**18. Aşağıdaki grupları Türkiye'deki sosyal statüleri açısından nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?**

*(1=Oldukça düşük, 4=Orta, 7=Oldukça yüksek)*

- Ermeni, - Suriyeli, - Çerkes, -Laz, - Türk, - Boşnak, - Kürt

**19. Aşağıdaki derecelendirme bir gruba ne derecede sıcaklık hissettiğiniz ile ilgilidir. '0' derece maksimum olumsuz, '100' derece ise maksimum olumlu tutumları belirtmektedir. '50' derece tutumların nötr olduğunu (ne olumsuz, ne olumlu) göstermektedir. Lütfen bu derecelendirmeyi kullanarak aşağıdaki grup üyelerine karşı hislerinizi 0-100 derece arasında belirtiniz.**

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Türk

Suriyeli

Kürt

Çerkes

Laz

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Boşnak

Ermeni

**20. Bu çalışmadaki sorular ve konular ile ilgili eklemek istediğiniz farklı düşünce ve yorumlarınız var ise, lütfen ekleyiniz.**

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## Survey Questions

1. Your age? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Your profession/occupation? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Your gender?

-Female

-Male

-Other

4. We are all citizen of Republic of Turkey, yet we might be from different ethnic groups. Which ethnic group do you identify yourself with?

- Turk - Kurd -Other

5. Where were you born? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Where do you live? \_\_\_\_\_

7. What do you think about your income level?

1- Very Low    2    3    4    5    6    7-Very High

In the next page, you will be asked to imagine a situation. Please read the instructions carefully.

8A. Please imagine for two minutes that you are hiking in the nature. Please think about the details you imagined about the hiking and what you saw (where are you, is there other people with you, who are they, what is like your surrounding).

8B. Please imagine for two minutes that you are in a café where you go often. There sits a Syrian who you do not recognize. You chat with the Syrian for 20-30 minutes. After the Syrian you've met left, you think that the conversation was delightful and interesting. Please think about the details about the conversation.

8C. Please imagine for two minutes that you are in a café where you go often. There sits a Turk who you do not recognize. You chat with the Turk for 20-30 minutes. After the

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**Turk you've met left, you think that the conversation was delightful and interesting.**

**Please think about the details about the conversation.**

Please tell us about the details of the conversation in 6-7 sentences.

**9. How interesting the situation you imagined was?**

1- Not interesting at all    2    3    4-Neutral    5    6    7-Very interesting

**10. How difficult it was to imagine this situation?**

1- Not difficult at all    2    3    4-Neither easy nor difficult    5    6    7-Very difficult

**11. How do you evaluate the situation you imagined?**

1- Extremely negative    2- Very negative    3- Somewhat negatively    4- Neither negative nor positive    5- Somewhat positive    6- Very positive    7- Extremely positive

**12. Please answer the questions below by marking according to degree to which you agree/disagree with the statement.**

*(1 = Strongly disagree, 4 = Neither agree nor disagree, 7 = Strongly agree)*

- I always spend time to learn about the history, tradition and culture of my ethnic group.
- I feel belong to my ethnic group.
- I understand what it means to belong to my ethnic group.
- I do my best to understand better my ethnic group.
- I talk to other people to learn more about my ethnic group.
- I feel a strong loyalty to my ethnic group.

**13. Please consider the perception of other groups for Kurds in general and answer the questions below by marking according to degree to which you agree/disagree with the statement.**

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*(1 = Strongly disagree, 4 = Neither agree nor disagree, 7 = Strongly agree)*

- In general, others think that Kurds are **good**.
- Most of others perceive Kurds as **less influential** than other groups.
- Others usually **respect** Kurds.
- In general, others think that Kurds are **worthless**.

**14. The questions below are about the degree to which you feel discriminated personally or ethnically. Please mark the answer that suits you.**

*(1 = Strongly disagree, 4 = Neither agree nor disagree, 7 = Strongly agree)*

- How often do you think you are discriminated because of your ethnic identity in Turkey? (1)  
(1)
- How often do you think members of your ethnic group are discriminated in Turkey? (2)

**15. Please mark the answers that you think it is correct.**

*(1 = Extremely disadvantaged, 4 = Equal, 7 = Extremely advantaged)*

- In the sense of economic rights, what is the position of your ethnic group compared to Turks? (1)
- In the sense of social rights, what is the position of your ethnic group compared to Turks? (2)

**16. Please indicate your opinions about the statements below.**

*(1 = Strongly disagree, 4 = Neither agree nor disagree, 7 = Strongly agree)*

- I find myself as valuable as other people. (1)
- I think I have some positive traits. (2)
- I have the tendency to see myself unsuccessful. (3)
- I can do as much as other people can do. (4)
- I don't find many things about myself to be proud of. (5)
- I have a positive self-attitude. (6)
- I am usually satisfied with myself. (7)

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- I wish I could respect myself more. (8)

- Sometimes I feel I am useless. (9)

-Sometimes, I think I am incapable. (10)

**17. Please think about how you are feeling now. For each item, select a number from 1 to 7, and indicate that number on your response sheet.**

*(1 = Absolutely no, 4 = Neither yes nor no, 7 = Absolutely yes)*

Positive, Negative, Good, Bad, Pleasant, Unpleasant, Happy, Sad, Afraid, Joyful, Angry,

Contented

**18. How would you order the groups below according to their status?**

*(1=Extremely low, 4=Mediocre, 7=Extremely high)*

- Armenian, - Bosniak, - Circassian - Greek, - Kurd, - Laz, - Syrian, - Turk

**19. The thermometer below is about your feelings. 0 indicates maximum negative attitude, 100 indicates maximum positive attitude, and 50 indicates neutrality (neither negative nor positive). Please indicate your feeling towards the groups by using the thermometer.**

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Armenian

Bosniak

Circassian

Greek

Kurd

Laz

Syrian

Turk

**20. If you have anything to add about the questions and topics of this study, please write them below.**

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## APPENDIX B



### Sabancı University Research Ethics Council (SUREC)

**Date:** November 2020

**To:** Assoc. Prof. Sabahat Çiğdem Bağı Hemşinlioğlu / Principal Investigator; Afife Serra TÜMER- MA Student / Co-Investigator  
**From:** Prof. Mehmet Yıldız, Chair of the Research Ethics Committee

**Protocol Number:** FASS-2020-63

**Protocol Name:** Imagined contact among minority group members: A comparison of majority and interminority contact

**Subject:** SUREC Approval

**Official Approval Date:** November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Sabancı University Research Ethics Council has approved the above named and numbered protocol through expedited review. You are responsible for promptly reporting to the SUREC:

- any severe adverse effects
- any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others;
- any proposed changes in the research activity

Enclosed you can find the below noted approved documents.

Protocol Application

Informed Consent Form

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me via phone at \_\_\_-\_\_\_-\_\_\_ or via e-mail at \_\_\_\_\_.

Best Regards,

*e-signature*

Prof. Mehmet Yıldız  
Chair of the Ethics Committee

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**SABANCI UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COUNCIL  
APPLICATION FOR RESEARCH STUDY**

<b>For SUREC Use Only</b>	
Protocol No: <b>FASS-2020-63</b>	Approval Date: November 27 <sup>th</sup> , 2020
Modification Requested Date:	Modification Approval Date:

- Title:** Imagined contact among minority group members: A comparison of majority and interminority contact
- Principal Investigator(s)** (The Principal Investigator must be a faculty member or equivalent); **Co-Investigator (s)** (The Co-Investigator must be Master's or Phd Student)

<b>Principal Investigator</b> Sabahat Çiğdem BAĞCI / Thesis Advisor - FASS		<b>Phone</b> -----
<b>Co-Investigator</b> Afife Serra TÜMER / MA Student		-----

Note: This application must be submitted by the Principal Investigator, who assumes full responsibility for compliance with this research study.

**3. Programme:**

Conflict Analysis and Resolution - MA Thesis

Please answer all questions below:

- 4. Will this be funded by an external sponsor?** Yes No

If yes, list sponsor/funding agency:  
Proposal Number:

- 5. Proposed Start Date** (actual date may not precede SUREC approval date)

November 2020 (as soon as the ethics process finalized)

**6. Describe the purpose of the research**

Contact hypothesis was introduced to the literature by Allport in 1954. Allport suggested that prejudice among the members of opposing groups can be reduced by contact under four conditions: cooperation, common goal, equal status and institutional support (Allport, 1954). Throughout years, Allport's contact theory has been researched extensively in the field of social psychology and conflict studies. Later research showed that without Allport's four conditions contact still reduced prejudice (Tolsma, Lubbers, Coenders, 2008; Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005).

Crisp and Turner (2009) further developed the contact theory by following the research showing that imagining a social situation results in the same effect as the real experience. Crisp and Turner (2009) suggests that imagining a positive contact situation can produce more positive perception of outgroups. Crisp and Turner's study paved the way for contact research where opportunities of actual contact is unlikely or impractical if not absent.

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In the current literature, contact between majority and minority has been studied extensively. Among majority-minority relations, research showed that contact effect is asymmetrical in the sense that it is stronger for majorities while weaker for minorities (Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005; Bikmen, 2011). Research on minority-minority contact is very limited, whereas interminority imagined contact is almost absent. With this study we will try to fill a gap in the literature and provide a test that can be applied to different minority groups

The objectives of the proposed research program can be outlined as follows:

- Testing imagined contact theory on Kurds' relations with Turks and Syrian refugees.
- Comparing a minority group's (Kurds) perception of a majority group and another minority group (Syrians) through imagined positive contact.
- Measuring differences in levels of in-group identification, outgroup attitudes, perceived discrimination, social comparison and relative deprivation.
- Contributing to the literature with a new research that is applicable to different groups around the world for both minority-majority imagined contact and inter-minority imagined contact (which is pretty much understudied).
- Contributing to the literature with a qualitative study which does not exist (to our knowledge) in the contact study.
- As the result of this study, we expect to understand better what we achieved and missed in our previous quantitative study.

#### **7. Describe procedures to be used and any associated risks or discomforts.**

Procedures should be specific and listed step by step.

7-10 self-identified Kurds will be interviewed online or face-to-face (depending on the logistic facilities such as location and access to internet of the interviewee) and asked to imagine a conversation with a Turk and a Syrian.

After the manipulations, we will ask questions about how the encounter affected the levels of in-group identification, outgroup attitudes, perceived discrimination, relative deprivation and perception of Turks and Syrians. Later we will ask to compare two encounters and how they feel about them (see Appendices for the questions).

The procedure involves the face-to-face or online interviews depending on the interviewee's location and access to internet. Interviewees will be recruited via snowball sampling. The entire interview would take 30-40 minutes. At the beginning of the study, participants would receive online consent forms and would be asked to tick a box confirming their voluntary participation. Participants would be reminded that they could end their participation whenever they felt uncomfortable.

The present study does not involve any predictable major risk or discomfort. However, there is a minor risk potential of participants' feeling uncomfortable when completing items related to ingroup identification, discrimination experiences and social comparison. Under this circumstance, participants are able to withdraw any time from the study and ask for the removal of their data from the data pool.

Data collected would be kept confidential and would be used for only academic purposes (research papers, conference presentations, etc.). As the data would be collected online, the co-investigator would be responsible for keeping copies of the online data for a minimum period of three years (mostly required by scientific journals). Moreover, the anonymous data would be uploaded at an online repository (if asked by the journal). This procedure is encouraged (and sometimes requested by highly prestigious social psychology journals), because of the increasing 'Open Science' tradition and the ethics of transparency in the psychology literature. However, we may choose to upload the data without demographic information, which will provide more anonymity.

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**8. Describe in detail any safeguards to minimize risks or discomforts, including any measures to render the data anonymous (you will not know the identity of the research subject) or confidential (subjects' identity or personal identifying information will not be disclosed).**

The informed consent form presented at the beginning of the study will state that the study is completely anonymous, therefore participants would not be required to report any identifying information such as names, other than participation numbers. Participants will be also reminded that data collected would be kept confidential and used only for academic purposes (such as academic papers).

**9. Describe any financial compensation or other potential benefits to the subjects associated with this research activity.**

Participants will not receive any payment for participation.

**10. Does the proposed human subject research pose a financial conflict of interest to the PI.**  Yes  No If yes, please explain.

**11. Is the consent form attached?**  Yes  No If no, please justify the need to waive this requirement. (If subjects under the age of 18 are to participate in the study, a parental consent form will also be required.)

**12. Benefits and Risks: Do the potential benefits to the subjects and/or the anticipated gain in research knowledge outweigh the risks to the subjects?**

The participants will not be asked for their names. Their data will be kept anonymous and confidential. They also have the right to leave research any time they want. While there is almost no risk, the research will provide the literature with a new area of analysis with a new method (qualitative) with regard to interminority imagined contact, which is a very understudied area.

**13. If another institution(s) is involved in the proposed research, please list each institution , the protocol number, and SUREC approval date.**  Yes  No

**14. After reviewing the University Research Ethics Council Instruction**

<http://mysu.sabanciuniv.edu/surecharitasi/tr/yonerqe/irg-a410-02>

**I believe this protocol to be:**

Exempt from further SUREC review  Expedited  Full Council review required.

**Applicants Signature**

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Protocol No: **FASS-2020-63**  
Modification Requested Date:

Approval Date: November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020  
Modification Approval Date:

**Title:** Imagined contact among minority group members: A comparison of majority and interminority contact

**Principal Investigator:** Assoc. Prof. Sabahat Çiğdem Bağcı Hemşinlioğlu / Thesis Advisor-FASS

**Co-Investigator:** Afife Serra TÜMER / MA Student

**THIS SPACE FOR SUREC USE ONLY**

- The protocol has been determined to be exempt from SUREC review in accordance with Sabancı University Research Ethics Council procedure.
- The protocol has been approved through expedited review in accordance with Sabancı University Research Ethics Council procedure.
- The Institutional Review Board has been approved the protocol through full review in accordance with Sabancı University Research Ethics Council procedure.

*The SUREC approval is valid for two years after the given approval date.*

**APPROVED BY THE SABANCI UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COUNCIL**

*e-signature*

Prof. Mehmet Yıldız  
SUREC Chair

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Prof. S. Arzu Wasti  
SUREC Member

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Assist. Prof. Nedim Nomer  
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Prof. Zafer Gedik  
SUREC Member

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## KATILIMCI BİLGİLENDİRME FORMU

Değerli Katılımcı,

Sizi katılmaya davet ettiğimiz bu araştırmada Türkiye'de gruplar arası iletişim ve değişimlere bakılacaktır. Bu araştırma Sabancı Üniversitesi Sanat ve Sosyal Bilimler Fakültesi Öğretim Üyesi Doç. Dr. Sabahat Çiğdem Bağcı danışmanlığında, Uyuşmazlık Analizi ve Çözümü Yüksek Lisans öğrencisi Afife Sera Tümer tarafından yürütülmektedir.

Deneye katılımınız gönüllüdür. Sorulara açık yüreklilikle yanıt vermeniz beklenmektedir. Sizden aldığımız yanıtlar gizli tutulacak, isim kullanılmayacak ve sadece akademik amaçlı değerlendirilecektir. Araştırmaya katıldıktan sonra, anketin herhangi bir anında kendinizi kötü hissetmeniz durumunda araştırmadan çekilmekte tamamen özgürsünüz. Mülakat yaklaşık 30-40 dakika sürecek olup katılımınızdan dolayı herhangi bir finansal karşılık almayacaksınız. Araştırmaya katılmayı kabul etmeniz durumunda mülakat boyunca ses/görüntü kaydı alınmasını da kabul etmiş sayılırsınız. Mülakat sırasında elde edilecek bütün ses/görüntü kayıtları ve notlar güvenli bir ortamda saklanacaktır. Paylaşılan bilgiler sadece öğrencinin yüksek lisans tezinde ve öğretim üyesinin yapacağı bilimsel yayınlarda kullanılacaktır.

Eğer araştırmanın amacı ile ilgili verilen bu bilgiler dışında şimdi veya araştırmanın herhangi bir aşamasında daha fazla bilgiye ihtiyaç duyarsanız araştırmacıya [info@sabanciuni.edu.tr](mailto:info@sabanciuni.edu.tr) e-posta adresinden veya [numaralı telefondan](tel:+903122222222) ulaşabilirsiniz. Eğer çalışma sırasında herhangi bir şekilde hak ihlaline uğradığımızı düşünüyorsanız lütfen Sabancı Üniversitesi Araştırma Etik Kurulu Başkanı Prof. Dr. Mehmet Yıldız'a [etik@sabanciuni.edu.tr](mailto:etik@sabanciuni.edu.tr) adresinden e-postayla veya [numaralı telefondan](tel:+903122222222) ulaşınız.

Katılımınız için şimdiden çok teşekkür ederiz.

\* 1. Yukarıda yazılanları okudum ve araştırmaya katılmayı kabul ediyorum.

Onaylıyorum

Onaylamıyorum

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## PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Dear Participant,

The research you are invited to participate aims to study intergroup contact and changes in Turkey. The study is conducted by Sabancı University Conflict Analysis and Resolution MA student Afife Serra Tümer, under the supervision of Assoc. Prof. Sabahat Çiğdem Bağcı, faculty member of Sabancı University Faculty of Art and Social Sciences.

Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. You are expected to answer questions honestly. Your name will not be asked or used, the answers you will give will be kept confidential, and will be used only for academic purposes. After you have participated the study, you are free to stop and leave the study anytime. The survey is expected to take 30-40 minutes. You will not receive any financial compensation for your participation. If you agree to participate in the research, you are deemed to have accepted the recording of audio / video throughout the interview. All audio / video recordings and notes obtained during the interview will be kept safe and confidential. The shared information will only be used in the student's master thesis and scientific articles to be published by the faculty member.

If you have any question about the purpose of the study, you can get contact with the researcher by e-mail at \_\_\_\_\_ or by phone at \_\_\_\_\_. I believe that your rights have been violated in any way, please contact Prof. Mehmet Yıldız, Chair of the Research Ethics Committee of Sabancı University at \_\_\_\_\_ by email at \_\_\_\_\_.

Thanks for your participation.

\*I have read above and I accept to participate to the study.

- I approve  
 I don't approve

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## Mülakat Soruları

Çalışmamız üç bölümden oluşacak. İlk bölümde sizden Türk biriyle karşılaştığımızı hayal etmenizi, daha sonra da Suriyeli biriyle karşılaştığımızı hayal etmenizi ve bu etkileşim sonucunda hissettiğiniz duyguları soracağım. Üçüncü bölümde ise her iki senaryodaki durumu birbiri ile karşılaştırmanızı rica edeceğim.

### Birinci Bölüm

- Haftanın herhangi bir gününde dışarı çıktığımızı ve gittiğiniz yerde Türk birisiyle karşılaştığımızı hayal edin. Yaklaşık yarım saat boyunca oturup sohbet ediyorsunuz ve güzel vakit geçiriyorsunuz. Nasıl bir ortam hayal ediyorsunuz? Karşınızdaki kişi nasıl biri?
- Neler konuşturdunuz? Etnik meseleler açılır mıydı?
- Bu kişiyle sohbetinizden sonra kendi etnik grubunuzla ilgili neler hissederdiniz? Özellikle grubunuza olan aidiyetiniz ve bağlılığınızı ve kendinizi tanımlamanızı nasıl değerlendirirsiniz?
- Kendi grubunuzun toplumdaki yeri, gücü ve saygınlığı hakkında ne düşünürdünüz?
- Bu karşılaşma sonrasında kendi etnik grubunuzun Türklere göre konumu hakkında ne hissederdiniz? Sosyal ve ekonomik haklar açısından etnik grubunuzun Türklere göre daha iyi veya daha kötü durumda olduğunu düşünür müydünüz? Ya da etnik grubunuzun ayrımcılığa uğradığını düşünür müydünüz?

### İkinci Bölüm

- Yine haftanın herhangi bir gününde dışarı çıktığımızı ve girdiğiniz ortamda Suriyeli birisiyle karşılaştığımızı hayal edin. Yine yaklaşık yarım saat boyunca oturup sohbet ediyorsunuz ve iyi vakit geçiriyorsunuz. Bulduğunuz ortam nasıl bir ortam? Karşınızdaki kişi nasıl biri?
- Neler konuşturdunuz? Suriyeliler ve Kürtler hakkında konuşur muydunuz?
- Sohbetinizin ardından kendi etnik grubunuza, kültürünüze bağlılığınız, aidiyetiniz hakkında nasıl hissederdiniz?
- Kendi grubunuzun toplumdaki yeri ve saygınlığı hakkında neler düşünürdünüz?
- Bu sohbetin ardından kendi etnik grubunuzun Türkiye’de Suriyelilere göre konumu hakkında nasıl hissederdiniz? Sosyal ve ekonomik haklar açısından etnik grubunuzun durumunun Suriyelilere göre daha iyi mi daha kötü mü olduğunu düşünürdünüz? Etnik grubunuzdan dolayı ayrımcılığa uğradığımızı hisseder miydiniz? Ya da etnik grubunuzun genel olarak ayrımcılığa uğradığını düşünür müydünüz?

### Üçüncü Bölüm

- Bu iki sohbeti karşılaştırdığımızda hangi ortamda kendinizi daha rahat/rahatsız hissettiniz? Sizi rahat/rahatsız hissettiren neydi?
- Hangi gruba karşı daha olumlu tutumlarınız var? Karşılaştığımız hangi kişiyle tekrar görüşmek isterdiniz?
- Sohbet ettiğiniz Türk ve Suriyeliden hangisiyle daha çok ortak yönünüz olduğunu düşünüyorsunuz? Neden?

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## Interview Questions

Our study will consist of three parts. In the first part, I will ask you to imagine meeting a Turkish person, then imagine meeting a Syrian person and the feelings you feel as a result of these interactions. In the third part, I will ask you to compare the situation in both scenarios with each other.

First Part:

- Imagine going out any day of the week and meeting a Turkish person wherever you go. You sit and chat for about half an hour and have a good time. What kind of environment do you imagine? What is the other person like?
- What would you talk about? Would ethnic issues be brought up?
- After your conversation with this person, how would you feel about your ethnic group? How would you rate your belonging and loyalty to your group and identification of yourself in particular?
- What would you think of your group's place, power and dignity in society?
- How would you feel about the position of your ethnic group relative to Turks after this encounter? Would you think your ethnic group is better or worse than Turks in terms of social and economic rights? Or would you think your ethnic group was discriminated against?

Second Part:

- Imagine going out again any day of the week and meeting a Syria at the place you go. Again, you sit and chat for about half an hour and have a good time. What is your environment like? What is the other person like? What would you talk about? Would you talk about Syrians and Kurds?
- After your conversation, how would you feel about your ethnic group identification and your ethnic culture?
- What would you think of your group's status and dignity in the society?
- How would you feel about the status of Syrians relative to your own ethnic group in Turkey after this conversation? Would you think the situation of your ethnic group is better or worse than Syrians in terms of social and economic rights? Would you feel discriminated against because of your ethnic group after the conversation? Or would you think your ethnic group was generally discriminated in Turkey?

Third part

- When you compare these two conversations, in which environment did you feel more comfortable / uncomfortable? What was it that made you feel comfortable / uncomfortable?
- Which group do you have more positive attitudes towards? Which of these two people you were chatting with would you like to meet again?
- Which of the Turks and Syrians you chat with do you think you have more in common? Why?

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