

Marriage-based naturalization applicants' experience with unwritten requirements and bureaucratic discretion: The case of Turkey

by

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**Marriage-based naturalization applicants' experience with
unwritten requirements and bureaucratic discretion: The case of
Turkey**

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For Kate, Bevin, and Inara

ABSTRACT

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In Turkey, Law No. 4866 (2003) represented a significant turning point in naturalized citizenship through marriage, simultaneously restricting and enabling access. While it permitted naturalization through marriage for men for the first time, it also revoked the automatic grant of citizenship through marriage for women and imposed various conditions on those applying. The passage of Law No. 5901 (2009) set forth additional requirements for marriage-based naturalization and established the Citizenship Application Review Commission. Each of these developments increased the role of bureaucratic officials—and bureaucratic discretion—in the naturalization process. In their dual role as *de facto* policy makers and as gatekeepers of the symbolic boundary of the state, bureaucratic officials determine who meets citizenship requirements and (re)define what is and is not in the public interest. Fieldwork, consisting of responses to an online survey and in-depth interviews with those applying for or granted citizenship through marriage as well as attorneys and consultants working with citizenship applicants, allows an applicant-centered examination of the role of bureaucratic discretion in within the Turkish context. I argue that bureaucratic discretion—demonstrated through unofficial policies and additional requirements imposed on would-be citizens by bureaucratic officials—is utilized in support of specific understandings of the Turkish national identity, a legacy of historical and contemporary nation building efforts. This leads to disparate marriage-based naturalization trajectories and outcomes as well as implicitly making marriage-based naturalization part of the ongoing nation-building project, requiring that applicants perform their understanding of the Turkish identity throughout the application process.

Keywords: Turkey; citizenship; marriage; bureaucratic discretion; national identity

ÖZETÇE

Evlilik yoluyla vatandaşlığa başvuranların yazılı olmayan gereksinimler ve bürokratik takdire dair deneyimleri: Türkiye Örneği

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4866 Numaralı Kanun (2003) Türkiye’de evlenme yoluyla vatandaşlık kazanılması hususunda önemli bir dönüm noktası olmuş, bir yandan gerekli koşulları sıkılaştırırken, bir diğer yandan da çeşitli kısıtlamaları kaldırmıştır. Erkekler için evlenme yoluyla vatandaşlık kazanımı ilk defa mümkün kılınırken, kadınlar için evlilik yoluyla doğrudan vatandaşlık kazanılma uygulamasına son verilmiş ve vatandaşlığın kazanılması çeşitli koşullara bağlanmıştır. 5091 Numaralı Kanun’un (2009) yürürlüğe girmesiyle ise, evlenme yoluyla vatandaşlık kazanılmasına ek koşullar getirilmiş ve Vatandaşlık Başvuru Değerlendirme Komisyonu kurulmuştur. Tüm bu gelişmeler, vatandaşlık kazanılması sürecinde yetkili bürokratların rolünü ve bürokratik takdir yetkilerini arttırmıştır. “De facto” kanun yapıcı ve devlet sınırlarının sembolik koruyucuları olarak çifte rol üstlenen bürokratlar, şahısların vatandaşlık için gereken koşulları yerine getirip getirmediğini belirlemekte ve toplumsal fayda açısından neyin doğru ya da neyin yanlış olduğuna karar vermektedirler. İnternet üzerinden yapılan anketlere verilen yanıtlar, evlenme yoluyla vatandaşlık başvurusunda bulunmuş veya vatandaşlık kazanmış kişilerin yanı sıra avukatlar ve vatandaşlık başvurularında uzmanlaşmış danışmanlarla yapılmış olan detaylı görüşmeleri içeren saha çalışmaları, Türkiye bağlamında bürokratik takdir yetkisinin kullanımının başvuru sahibi açısından incelenmesini mümkün kılmıştır. Gayri resmi uygulamalar ve bürokratlar tarafından dayatılan ek koşullardan anlaşıldığı üzere, bürokratik takdir yetkisinin, tarihsel ve çağdaş değerler ışığında Türk ulusal kimliğinin oluşturulması çabalarına destek olması amacıyla kullanıldığını öne sürmekteyim. Bu durum evlilik yoluyla vatandaşlık kazanımı hususunda tutarsız süreç ve sonuçlara neden olup, evlilik yoluyla vatandaşlık kazanılmasını üstü kapalı bir biçimde devam etmekte olan ulus-inşa projesi bir parçası haline getirmekte, başvuru süreci boyunca, başvuru sahiplerinin Türk kimliğine aşinalıklarına dair bir performansı gerekli kılmaktadır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Türkiye, vatandaşlık, evlilik, bürokratik takdir, ulusal kimlik

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Koç

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DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Bureaucratic discretion: The ability of a civil servant to use professional judgment determining applicant eligibility and/or compliance decisions. The level and type of discretion exercised (e.g., determining compliance with seemingly objective criteria versus more subjective requirements) depends on the position held.

Citizenship: As meant in this dissertation, citizenship refers to the legal status of “citizen” conferred by a state. This status may be widely available or limited to a select few. Citizenship, as a legal status, is generally conferred at birth to the children of citizens, though there may be specific regulatory requirements to fulfill (e.g., timely registration of birth). All others with an interest in obtaining citizenship in a given state must meet additional requirements to become naturalized citizens.

Fake marriage: Alternately termed a fraudulent marriage or marriage of convenience, a fake marriage may be defined from the perspective of the state as one entered into for the purpose of obtaining rights or benefits the recipient is not otherwise qualified for or entitled to (e.g., citizenship).

International marriage migration: Also termed cross-border marriage, I define international marriage as one between two individuals from different countries of origin. International marriage migration is defined as immigration for the purpose of or resulting in an international marriage, even if marriage is not the primary goal of the initial immigration (e.g., tourism, education, labor immigration may all result in international marriage migration). Such marriages typically have the potential to change one partner’s citizenship status within their partner’s home state.

International marriage research nexus: Research focusing on international marriage migration and at least one of the following: gender, immigration, citizenship, and/or nation building.

National identity: A deeply held public understanding of the characteristics of a member of the nation or state (i.e., citizen) in terms of ethnicity, culture, language, and/or religion.

Naturalization: This is a process by which a non-citizen may obtain citizenship in a particular state. The pathways for naturalization depend on state legislation and are thus presented according to typical divisions or pathways.

Regular naturalization. One of the ways adult labor and education migrants who meet state requirements may gain state citizenship is through the “regular” naturalization processes. State requirements generally include a period of residence and some level of fluency in the state language(s), though income and/or integration requirements are fairly common as well.

Marriage-based naturalization. Many states offer a non-citizen spouse the opportunity to gain state citizenship after marriage provided state requirements are met. These requirements may include that the marriage have been in effect for a particular period, a specified period of residence within the state, and some level of fluency in the state language(s).

Exceptional naturalization. Due to globalization, many states feel the need to compete with others to attract and retain top-level foreign talent, which may include athletic, scientific, business, or other skills. State perceptions of individual mobility have led them to create specific procedures to offer citizenship to those who display such “exceptional” abilities.¹ There are no general trends in state requirements for this pathway.

Investment-based naturalization. In order to facilitate the inflow of global investment capital, many states have created a specific pathway toward citizenship for those who invest a significant amount of capital in the state. This may be done in the form of real estate or business ventures, depending on state regulations. This pathway also often requires a certain period of residence, but it is often much shorter than the period required for regular naturalization or naturalization through marriage. Typically, there is no language fluency requirement for this naturalization pathway.

¹ I use the term “perceptions of individual mobility” because a significant number of otherwise talented individuals are immobile in a “mobile,” globalized world.

CHAPTER 1. AN INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGICAL OVERVIEW OF MARRIAGE-BASED NATURALIZATION AND THE ROLE OF BUREAUCRATIC DISCRETION

1.1 *Background*

From the perspective of the state, marriage is a relatively simple legal matter, a contract between two parties, albeit one with a host of financial and legal implications. International marriage—marriage between those from different countries of origin—elevates this simple matter to one of much greater state concern. There are two reasons for this. First, international marriage is a highly symbolic act, perhaps particularly in a nation-state. This is because through this private, yet state-governed action, one person traditionally becomes a member of their partner’s nation, adopting its cultural customs and social mores (at least to a certain extent). Secondly, in many states around the world, the act of marriage also provides a noncitizen with the means to become a member of that state—a citizen—with attendant claims to legal and political rights. International marriage therefore brings together the issues of nation-building, immigration, and citizenship in ways that labor and other types of (im)migration do not, creating a nexus of research opportunity.

There is a variety of scholarly literature focusing on the international marriage research nexus (i.e., research that focuses on international marriage and immigration, citizenship, gender, and/or nation-building). Such research includes studies on traditional “settler” states (e.g., the U.S., Australia, and Canada), East Asia (e.g., Thailand, South Korea, and Japan), as well as popular destination states within the E.U. (e.g., Germany, Denmark, and Finland). While some scholars have examined Turkey within the varying frameworks of international marriage migration, much of the research involving Turkey positions it as the *sender* of cross-border marriage migrants (see, for example, Bonjour & de Hart, 2013; Charsley & Liversage, 2015; Kulu & Hannemann, 2016). English-language research about Turkey as a marriage migration *destination* has generally focused on the experience of specific ethnic groups, specifically (women) from Bulgaria, Georgia, and the post-Soviet space in general (see, for example, Akyüz, 2017; Bloch, 2011; Kaytan, 2016). There is little research on the experience of other marriage migrants to Turkey, despite its growing

popularity as a transit and destination state for international migrants from Europe as well as Africa, Asia, and the Americas.

Research conducted in a variety of contexts further indicates immigration, specifically the pathways it provides to naturalization, is a key battleground in struggles over the national identity (see, for example, Bonjour & de Hart, 2013; Cole, 2014; Hobsbawm, 1992; Hollifield & Wong, 2015). Thus, one important theme that reoccurs throughout the marriage migration literature focusing on Europe is the role of bureaucratic officials as gatekeepers of the citizenship status. Primed to spot potential “fake marriages,” bureaucratic officials often rely on the lenses of gender and culture—that is to say, whether the migrant spouse adheres to the racialized and gendered expectations the official has regarding their country of origin—and bureaucratic scrutiny, probationary periods, and restrictions fall more heavily on those from specific countries and ethnic groups (Andrikopoulos, 2021; Eggebo, 2013; Pellander, 2015; Wray, 2006). In Turkey, (im)migration and naturalization access have been tools of nation building since the inception of the state itself (de Bel-Air, 2016; Gülalp, 2006; İçduygu & Aksel, 2013). There has been less discussion, however, on officials’ lenses in Turkey (e.g., gender, culture, politics, etc.) and the use of bureaucratic discretion in officials’ work (for important exceptions, see Kadirbeyoğlu & Çınar, 2016; Toktaş & Çelik, 2017).

Concerns that individuals are using marriage to gain citizenship in order to access the labor market, take advantage of state welfare regimes, and/or cover up illicit activities (e.g., prostitution, smuggling, etc.) are not limited to the Global North and have led to greater bureaucratic scrutiny and space for discretionary decisions around the world (see, for example, Bloch, 2011; Bonjour & de Hart, 2013; Brettell, 2017; Gutekunst, 2015; G. Kim & Kilkey, 2017; Le Bail, 2017; Lee, 2015; Leinonen & Pellander, 2014; Töttös, 2015; Yeoh et al., 2013). In Western Europe and the United States, this has also been linked with issues of racism and Islamophobia resulting from both official policy and bureaucratic discretion (Alexander, 2013; Chowdhury, 2018; de Hart, 2015b; Kofman et al., 2015; Leutloff-Grandits, 2019; Mouritsen, 2013; Saulnier, 2015; Topak et al., 2015). Less attention, however, has been paid to how increased bureaucratic scrutiny and discretion have been experienced in non-Western countries with regard to the international marriage research nexus. In light of growing nationalism and politicization of (im)migration in Turkey, in particular, it is worth examining how official policy and bureaucratic discretion play out.

In Turkey, Law No. 4866 (2003), which amended Turkish Citizenship Law No. 403 (1964) represented a significant turning point in a noncitizen's ability to naturalize through marriage. Replacing the declaration of intent required by the earlier law with a three-year waiting period and defined application process, Law No. 4866 (2003) also allowed men to gain citizenship through marriage for the first time (Law No. 403 Türk Vatandaşlığı Kanunu [Turkish Citizenship Law], 1964; Law No. 4866 Türk Vatandaşlığı Kanununda Değişiklik Yapılmasına İlişkin Kanun [Law Amending the Turkish Citizenship Law], 2003). Just as importantly, it created multiple opportunities for bureaucratic discretion to play a greater role in determining who would be able to access citizenship. It was replaced in 2009 by Law No. 5901, the new Turkish Citizenship Law. While the law itself made no changes regarding marriage-based naturalization, its implementation via Regulation 2010/139 increased the importance of bureaucratic discretion in the decision-making process.

This research fills three important gaps within the literature. First, it positions Turkey as a *destination* country for marriage migrants. A number of geographic and political factors, including Turkey's relative proximity to states experiencing upheaval, its location between the E.U. and Western Asia, its quest for E.U. accession, and strong tourism industry, have served to increase its popularity as both a transit and destination state for international migrants. Not surprisingly, intermarriage between Turkish citizens and noncitizens has also increased, but existing literature is limited to particular groups (e.g., post-Soviet and/or Eastern European women, ethnic kin). My fieldwork goes beyond these widely studied groups and finds that Turkey plays host to women and men from around the world who have married Turkish spouses. Secondly, I recognize that nation-building is an ongoing process, one that supports specific understandings of the national identity. In the case of Turkey, this ongoing nation-building project—and thus ethno-religious national identity—is also strengthened by increasing nationalist rhetoric and policy (Acar & Altunok, 2013; Hoffman et al., 2018; International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2020; Kirişçi & Sloat, 2019; Uzgel, 2022). While Turkey officially considers itself a secular state, both the concept of secularism and the secular state have come under increasing challenge since the 1980s (Hoffman et al., 2018; Öztürk, 2019; Kali Robinson, 2022). Along with these socio-political challenges, Turkey has a history of discrimination against specific populations, with clear geographic, socio-political, and legal boundaries historically drawn between those who are Turkish, those who may

become Turkish, and those who have been judged unassimilable. It is because of this history and ongoing contention that Turkey presents an interesting case in which to examine the role of bureaucratic officials in marriage-based naturalization. Applying the perspective of street level bureaucracy and discretion to matters of migration in Turkey, Kadirbeyoğlu and Çınar (2016) highlight a major gap between the legal framework of naturalization and bureaucratic implementation when interpreting undefined or unclear conditions for naturalization. Toktaş and Çelik (2017) additionally note a significant difference between the laws governing border crossings and the reality on the ground at the Sarp land border gate between Turkey and Georgia. They go on to describe the key role of discretion in implementing laws, arguing that it is officials' preferences that determine "...how strictly legislation is imposed. Thus, there emerges a gap between official and *de facto* policy and between national legislation and local implementation of laws regulating migration and border crossings" (Toktaş & Çelik, 2017). Finally, despite the contestation—and continued strength—of the Turkish identity, existing literature has not considered how often bureaucratic discretion is used in service of the national identity, reifying specific understandings of what it means to be "Turkish." Thus, in light of its history, changes to the laws and regulations governing marriage-based naturalization, and the challenges posed to the national identity by increased immigration, an examination of marriage-based naturalization in Turkey through the lens of bureaucratic discretion offers contributions to the literature to help fill these gaps.

1.2 The puzzle: Research questions and methodological approach

From a procedural perspective, the acquisition of citizenship does not appear unduly complex: one must only meet certain requirements and submit specific paperwork. This is not the case, however. Citizenship defines the boundaries of membership within a state. Even where it is not a highly politicized issue, immigrants and would-be citizens may (purposefully or inadvertently) challenge certain aspects of the national self-identity, such as the ethnic or religious makeup of society or the socio-cultural practices of citizens. Moreover, according to the literature on street-level bureaucracy, in situations where applicable law(s) and/or regulation(s) are vaguely written or lack quantifiable criteria and/or clear and specific definitions of key terms, there is an inherent level of discretion in decisions made by bureaucratic officials—from appointed policy makers all the way

down to street-level (e.g., lower level and/or public facing) staff. In the Turkish context, the national identity is contested and laws governing access to that identity lack specific criteria; at the same time, bureaucratic officials involved in the naturalization process see themselves as keepers of the symbolic boundaries of the nation. These factors have the potential to create discrimination in citizenship access along ethnic, religious, and/or cultural lines. This research therefore asks whether applicants experience discrimination in the naturalization process based on particular understandings of the national identity.

Overall, this work seeks to examine marriage-based applicants' experiences with naturalization to determine whether and how specific understandings of the Turkish national identity impact their process of marriage-based naturalization. In order to aid in this determination, from the general to the specific, I also ask the following questions:

- What are applicants' experiences with bureaucratic decision making and discretion during the process of marriage-based naturalization?
 - Do demographic factors, particularly those related to contested aspects of the Turkish identity, impact applicants' naturalization process?
- Have discretionary decisions led to informal policies of citizenship eligibility based on specific understandings of the Turkish national identity?

I take a pragmatic approach to my research questions and methods. As defined by Creswell (2009), researchers within this paradigm draw from qualitative and quantitative assumptions, methods, techniques, and procedures and specifically look for multiple approaches in data collection and analysis, emphasizing the research problem and making it well-suited for mixed-methods research. As my research questions include both objective (e.g., legal requirements) and subjective realities (e.g., applicant experiences), a pragmatic approach to overall data collection and analysis is beneficial. This paradigm allows an examination of the messy multiple realities of how an event is experienced by individuals alongside and in contrast to the regulatory environment. In doing so, it spotlights the messy reality of policy implementation.

I draw upon a mixed-methods strategy that centers applicants' experiences in the naturalization application process. Through: examination of statistical data, an online survey, and

in-depth semi-structured interviews with successful and unsuccessful marriage-based naturalization applicants, as well as attorneys and consultants who work with them, I highlight how specific understandings of the national identity guides the use of bureaucratic discretion throughout the application process. The quantitative data sets the stage: what we know about the population of international marriage migrants in Turkey and how survey respondents compare to this population. The qualitative data adds individuals' stories, highlighting personal experiences of the naturalization process with reference to the legislation and regulations in effect at the time. Through an online survey and semi-structured interviews, applicants describe their naturalization process from initial document requirements through the interview process(es).

In this research, I distinguish between official policy as written policy, which may be formally legislated or found in employee handbooks, agency policy manuals, and the like, and *de facto* or unofficial policy as unwritten and comprised of institutionalized collective practices. This is consistent with the pragmatic approach of my study, which recognizes the important effects of both types of policies. This dissertation also provides a novel perspective—that of immigrants and consultants—by exploring individual experiences with the naturalization process. This mixed methods, pragmatic approach allows me to present respondents' lived experiences in meeting the official objective criteria (e.g., document requirements) and subjective criteria (e.g., a “real marriage,” “family unity,” etc.) and highlights variations in their experiences.

1.3 Chapter outline

Taking a pragmatic, mixed methods approach, I examine the marriage-based naturalization application process from the applicants' perspectives, which allows me to highlight implementation gaps in Turkish naturalization policy. In doing so, I make use of statistical data, an online survey, and interviews with successful and unsuccessful marriage-based naturalization applicants as well as with attorneys and consultants who work with them. My research reveals variation in applicants' experiences that point to the use of bureaucratic discretion in decision making. I argue many of these discretionary decisions reflect and are used in support of specific understandings of the Turkish national identity.

The remainder of this dissertation is structured as follows. In Chapter 2, I introduce and examine the theoretical frameworks that inform my research in the international marriage research nexus. Based on the literature presented, I argue that the naturalization process, the acquisition of citizenship status other than by birth, is inherently part of a state's ongoing nation-building project and can be used to reify specific understandings of "the nation." I add that bureaucratic discretion in decision making related to naturalization often serves to support these understandings, creating unofficial policies of deservingness and belonging. In Chapter 3, I turn my attention to the case of Turkey in light of the gaps identified in the literature, explain my choice of the Turkish case, and provide a fuller discussion of my research methodology and design. In Chapter 4, I explore the long history of the Turkish identity, setting the stage for the contemporary context in Turkey for marriage-based naturalization applicants. I argue that core components of this identity have remained consistent since the late Ottoman period, despite ongoing contestation. More recently, as Turkey has undertaken a nationalist and authoritarian turn, the traditional ethno-religious understanding of the Turkish identity has been further instrumentalized by the ruling AKP in response to challenges to this ethno-religious identity. Chapters 5-9 present empirical data gathered during fieldwork in 2019. Chapter 5 presents the contemporary context of Turkey via analysis of statistical data, which also serves to contextualize responses to the online survey offered to foreign-born spouses of Turkish citizens. I examine what is known about the population of marriage-based citizens and naturalization applicants. I then compare respondents to the online survey to this population. Finally, I examine the online survey respondents in light of trends highlighted within the literature to see how Turkey "fits." In Chapters 6, 7, and 8, I examine data from the online survey and interviews as related to each of the three phases of the (current) marriage-based naturalization process: the initial application and documentation, interactions with the police and/or security forces, and the interview with the Citizenship Application Review Commission (CARC). In each chapter, I highlight differences between the official requirements or process and applicants' lived experiences. In Chapter 9, I further explore specific themes raised during the interviews vis-à-vis the theoretical frameworks I discuss in Chapter 2: nation-building, identity, gender, and bureaucratic discretion. I argue that the ethno-religious Turkish identity is actively protected and reinforced by the gatekeepers of the nation and national identity—those officials charged with overseeing the acquisition (and loss) of citizenship—who utilize the discretion inherent in their positions to require marriage-based naturalization applicants to demonstrate their

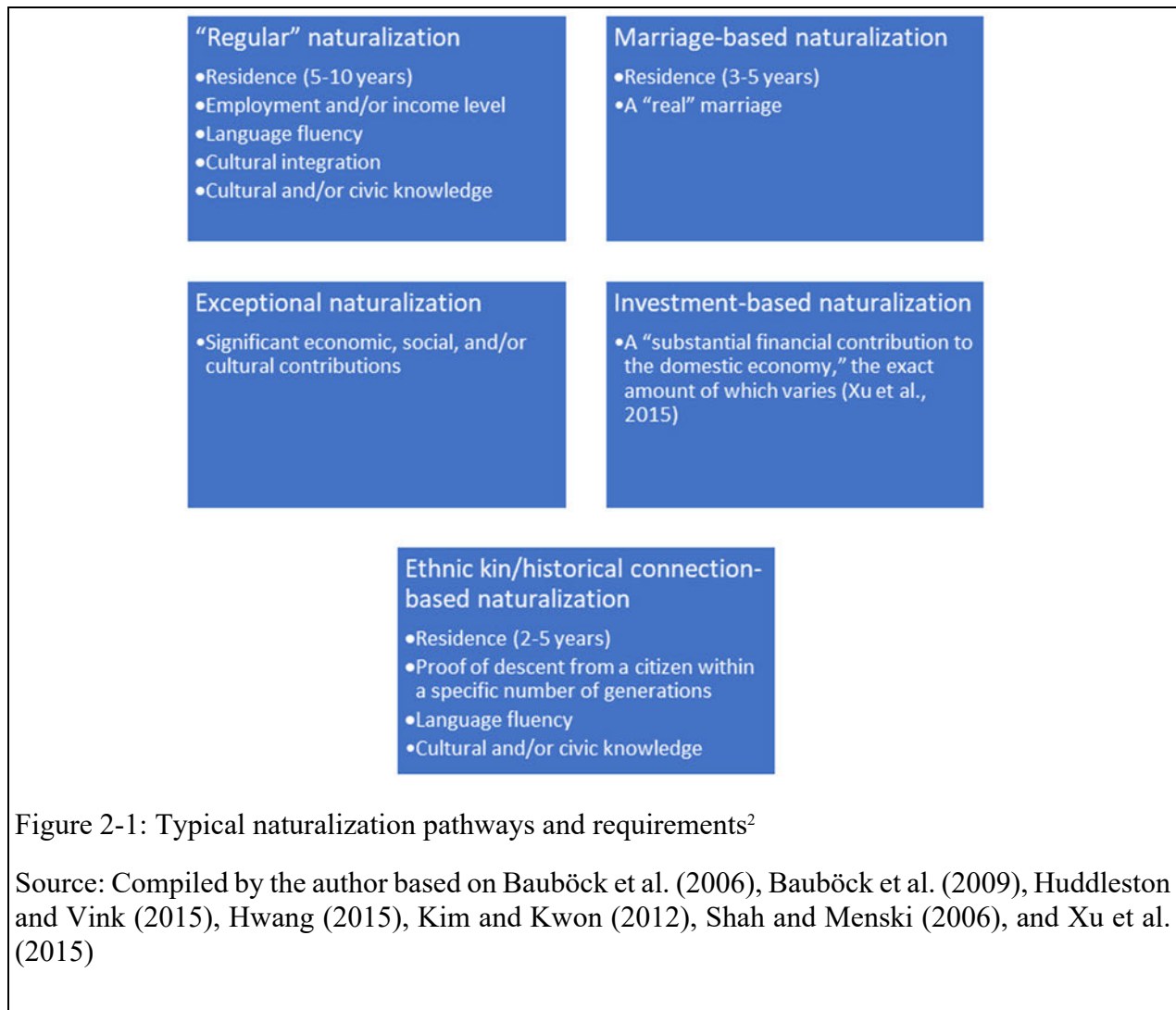
“Turkishness” throughout the application process. Finally, in Chapter 10, I discuss the implications of this research—the disparate ethnicized and gendered impacts of inconsistently applied informal policies of citizenship eligibility—and argue that the various discretionary requirements applied to marriage-based naturalization applicants not only require them to fall within the contours of the Turkish national identity and cultural norms but also make the marriage-based naturalization process part of an ongoing nation-building process.



CHAPTER 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS OF MARRIAGE-BASED NATURALIZATION AND TURKEY

2.1 Introduction

It can be argued that the ability to acquire citizenship through marriage serves as a litmus test for whether an individual is allowed to belong to a society. Unlike citizenship through investment, so-called “regular” naturalization, or naturalization through ethnic or family connection, laws governing the acquisition of citizenship through marriage—broadly speaking—typically include far fewer requirements (see **Error! Reference source not found.**); they are typically predicated on the presence of a “real” marriage and—lacking simple disqualifiers such as ethnic/historic connection or monetary investment thresholds—often focus on how well the applicant “fits” with the society. It is in making these determinations that marriage-based naturalization is particularly interesting: In their official role as gatekeepers to citizenship, officials—from street-level functionaries and career civil servants to political appointees—are tasked with determining whether applicants meet all legal requirements, including whether applicants’ marriages are “real” and how well they “fit” a particular society. Often, such decisions are made without recourse to more technical or quantifiable reasons for denial, instead relying on these more subjective criteria.



² In Turkey, for example, under Law No. 5901 (2009), a “regular” citizenship applicant must reside in Turkey for five years before applying, must not have a disease posing a danger to public health, must be of good morals, must speak “an adequate level of Turkish,” have sufficient income or employment, and not pose a threat to national security and the public order. While the residence requirement for a descent-based applicant drops to two years, the other requirements remain in place. By contrast, a marriage-based applicant must only wait three years from the date of marriage (and the marriage must be ongoing), must be living in “family unity” with the Turkish spouse, must avoid acts “not compatible with the marriage unity,” and must not pose a threat to national security or the public order; there are no residency, public health, or morality requirements in either Law No. 5901 (2009) or Regulation 2010/139 (2010).

Bringing together issues of nation-building, immigration, citizenship, and gender the international marriage research nexus contains literature from multiple perspectives about these themes, particularly when it also involves the issue of bureaucratic discretion. Specifically, literature within this nexus may be from the perspective of the state, individuals, or even bureaucratic officials themselves.³ Because I have chosen to present an applicant-centered perspective in the context of a specific legal/regulatory environment, I have also chosen to include multiple perspectives on nexus themes such as the national identity, citizenship, and gender.

According to the literature on cross-border marriage migration, bureaucratic discretion has the potential to create discrimination in citizenship access based on varying understandings of a “real” marriage and expectations toward integration, regardless of how well the applicant meets legal requirements of Law No. 4866, Türk Vatandaşlığı Kanununda Değişiklik Yapılmasına İlişkin Kanun [Law Amending the Turkish Citizenship Law] (2003), implemented by Regulation 2004/7275, and Law No. 5901, Türk Vatandaşlığı Kanunu [Turkish Citizenship Law] (2009), implemented by Regulation 2010/139.⁴ In the context of Turkey, there has long been contention over defining the “Turkish” identity—ethno-religious or civic—as well as a history of discrimination against particular populations. As such, it is valid to inquire whether and how bureaucratic discretion in decision-making might contribute to creating barriers or facilitating access to naturalization through marriage in Turkey based on applicant characteristics.

English language research on cross-border marriage migration has been most comprehensively focused on the context of Asia, particularly South Korea, but also including

³ The perspective of bureaucratic officials should be considered as distinct from the government, as distinct from the state. The state encompasses both the political government and career bureaucratic officials who may or may not share the same aims. Bureaucratic officials also have different priorities and areas of focus than the state, making their perspectives unique from one another.

⁴ Law No. 4866 (2003) is available at <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2003/06/20030612.htm#1>; Regulation 2004/7275, “Regulation 2004/7275 on the Implementation of Turkish Citizenship Law Due to Marriage With a Turkish Citizen” is available at <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2004/05/20040524.htm#4>; Law No. 5901 (2009) is available at <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2009/06/20090612-1.htm>; “Regulation 2010/139 on the Implementation of Turkish Citizenship Law” is available at <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2010/04/20100406-9.htm>.

China, Vietnam and Singapore (Chee et al., 2014; Hao, 2015; M. Kim, 2010; Lu, 2005; Williams, 2010), and traditional settler states like the U.S. and Australia (including Obinna, 2017; Kathryn Robinson, 2007; Ryabov, 2016; Williams, 2010). More recent studies have expanded to include popular destination states, both in the E.U. (including Cole, 2014; de Hart, 2006; Eggebo, 2013; Fernandez & Jensen, 2014; Kofman, 2004; Niedomysl et al., 2010; Pellander, 2015; Wray, 2006) and its periphery (including Akyüz, 2017; Bloch, 2011; Dumbrava, 2017). Such research has drawn on the more general literature on citizenship, including the legal context of citizenship status and rights (Abrams, 2013; Bauböck et al., 2006, 2009; Blackledge, 2016; Toner, 2006), the political context of immigration and citizenship regimes (Abou-Chadi, 2016; Bonjour & de Hart, 2013; Howard, 2009; H. J. Kim et al., 2014; J. Kim & Kwon, 2012), marriage brokers and regulations (Chee et al., 2012; J. Kim et al., 2014; Pellander, 2019; Reinold et al., 2016; Yakushko & Rajan, 2017), and the social context of marriage migrant experiences (e.g., Charsley & Wray, 2015; Cheng, 2011; M. Kim, 2010, 2013; Kofman, 2005; Malhotra et al., 2016). In the case of Turkey, research on cross-border marriage migration has largely focused on Turkey as the country of origin not as the destination (Bonjour & de Hart, 2013; Charsley & Liversage, 2015; Kulu & Hannemann, 2016). Existing scholarship about Turkey as a marriage migration destination has generally focused on the experience of specific ethnic groups, including (women) from Bulgaria (Kaytan, 2016), Georgia (Akyüz, 2017) and the post-Soviet space (Bloch, 2011), with a focus on marriage between ethnic kin and/or “fake marriages.” This dissertation research goes beyond this focus to examine the field of international marriage migration and marriage-based naturalization more generally. Moreover, this dissertation research views the legal context of citizenship in light of applicants’ lived naturalization experiences, recognizing that citizenship laws and regulations are (re)interpreted through the everyday practices of bureaucratic officials who are affected by the social and political contexts.

This review of the literature is thus intended to situate the context of contemporary Turkey within the larger literature related to the international marriage research nexus and street level bureaucracy, which also includes the related literatures of nation-building, immigration and naturalization, and gender. With nation-building as an ongoing project, the acquisition or denial of citizenship serves as one nation-building mechanism. The mechanism of citizenship, as well as the ongoing nation-building project it supports, have ethnicized and gendered outcomes. These do not

occur in a vacuum: they result from discretionary decisions made over time as well as official policy. While citizenship itself is nation-building mechanism, creating a legal status with attendant rights and obligations, *access* to citizenship is a matter of national identity. It provides a demarcation between those who share a particular “imagined community” and “invented” traditions—a national identity—and those who do not (Anderson, 1991; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). This national identity is an area of ongoing socio-cultural, even political, contestation, even when citizenship itself is less politicized.

As Klusmeyer (2001) notes, the issue of citizenship connects a number of policy domains because it is related to the fundamental questions of defining the boundaries of membership within and between polities, the allocation of benefits and burdens, and how member identities should be understood and accommodated. Even where citizenship and immigration are not highly politicized issues, immigrants and would-be citizens may (purposefully or inadvertently) challenge certain aspects of the national self-identity. One potential result of this challenge is identified within the literature regarding street-level bureaucracy. When it comes to certain matters, particularly those where applicable law(s) and/or regulation(s) are vaguely written, lacking quantifiable criteria, or absent clear and specific definitions of key terms, there is an inherent level of discretion in decisions made by bureaucratic officials—from appointed policy makers all the way down to street-level (e.g., lower level and/or public facing) staff. This discretion, if applied consistently in a single direction, adds up to *de facto* policy. In a context such as Turkey where the national identity is contested, for example, and laws governing access to that identity are vaguely written, informal understandings of the nation—the national identity—have a significant potential to affect the implementation and enforcement laws governing naturalization.

2.2 Building the nation(al identity)

For a state, nation-building is, at heart, the process of determining who belongs within the nation as evidenced by their citizenship within the state. Brubaker (1992) famously argued that citizenship policies are a legacy of nation-building activities, thus tying citizenship policies to historical experience. In some cases, (e.g., France), this led to an assimilationist, though expansive, view of potential belonging whereas in others (e.g., Germany), this led to strongly descent-based

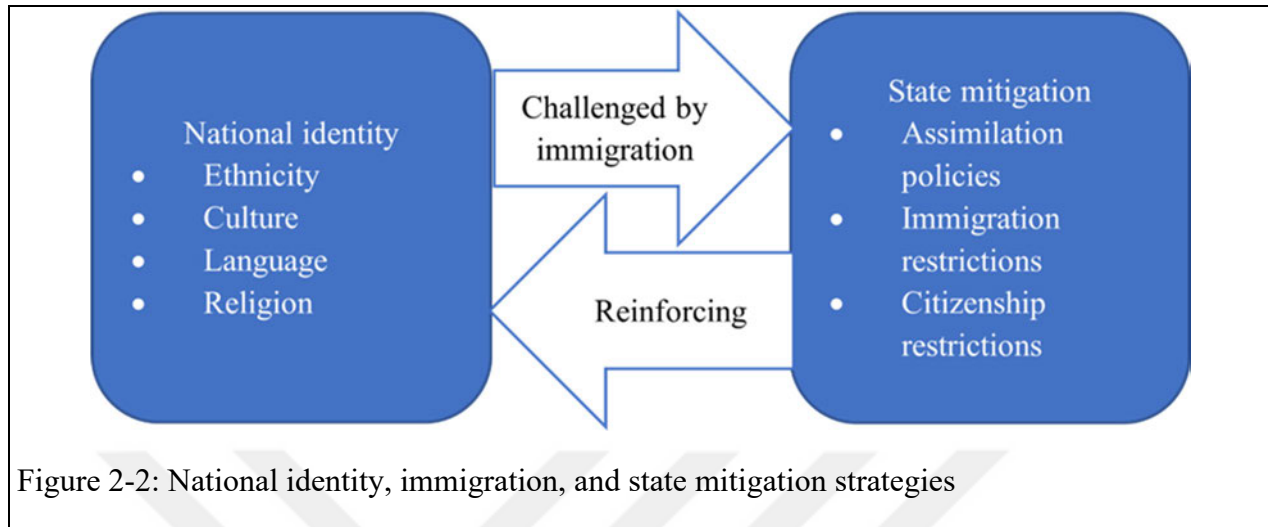
exclusive citizenship (Brubaker, 1992). In both cases, the critical factor was how the nation-state was formed.

Greenfeld (1992, 2006b, 2019) further explored the issue of nation-building and citizenship as a historical legacy, arguing that citizenship expresses a reflection of ethnic identity and positing three potential types of ethnic understandings: collectivistic-ethnic, collectivistic-civic and individualistic-civic, each with specific understandings of national self-understanding and citizenship regime outcomes. These potential types come about based on “whether the nation is seen as a composite entity or in unitary terms, and on whether the criteria of national membership, that is, nationality, are civic or ethnic” (Greenfeld, 2006a, p. 194). Collectivistic-ethnic states, for example, have a traditional ethnic distinction to state membership and citizenship is an expression of ethnic identity. The collectivistic-civic group of states have an assimilationist or republican model of citizenship; while the nation continues to have a collective identity, the state and citizenship are defined in political and secular terms. Individualistic-civic states follow a pluralist or civic pluralism model, allowing full political membership while accepting ethnic or cultural differences. Weldon (2006) used this framework of ethnic understandings to examine different outcomes in terms of the restrictiveness of citizenship policies and treatment of ethnic minorities in the case of the European Union. Despite global trends toward convergence in citizenship laws due to domestic and international pressures, Weldon (2006) found “a strong relationship between the laws governing the acquisition and expression of citizenship, that is, citizenship regime type, and individual [citizen] tolerance judgments [of ethnic minorities]” and argues this is due to the embodiment of cultural traditions that govern state membership within citizenship laws and policies (Weldon, 2006, p. 331). While these understandings of how citizenship policies are formed are important, they remain limited to the European and/or settler-state context (e.g., the U.S., Canada and Australia). Looking outside of this context is important in examining citizenship policies, particularly with regard to ethnicity and other demographic characteristics, allowing a better grasp of the interplay of different factors.

Hobsbawm (1992) argues that different understandings of nations are both the product of and legitimation for various political interests. As such, they are not apolitical, organic or impervious to change and may further reflect changes in or challenges to the national self-identity

resulting from the forces of immigration, globalization or other exogenous shocks (Hollifield & Wong, 2015). Brubaker (1992) agrees, in that the nation is supported by contemporary understandings of citizenship which produce national membership identity; the definition of citizenship is shaped and mediated by cultural arrangements which are subject to change (albeit slowly). This status of citizenship allows the state and society to divide “insiders” from “outsiders,” but may be more or less permeable or stable (Bauböck, 2006a). While national citizenship is a “membership organization,” it goes beyond legal membership within a nation-state and represents an important “social closure” delineating access to territory, goods, opportunities and rewards, (Brubaker, 1992, p. 21).

Nation-building activities seek to institutionalize a specific understanding of the nation in terms of ethnicity, culture, language and religion; this can also be understood as an ongoing process that can be challenged by (im)migration, leading to state mitigation efforts; see Figure 2-2: National identity, immigration, and state mitigation strategies. International marriage may pose a particular threat to the self-conception of the state (Bonjour & de Hart, 2013; Cole, 2014; Moon, 2015; Orgad, 2016). At least in part, this has led to the trend toward cultural assimilation as a prerequisite for admission and/or citizenship, and the extension of cultural assimilation requirements beyond the borders of the state to incoming family members who are required to be familiar with and follow native-born customs and culture in addition to familiarity with the state language(s) (de Leeuw & van Wichelen, 2012; Muhleisen et al., 2012; Orgad, 2016). Gutekunst (2015) similarly discusses how pre-immigration language requirements serve to reinforce national self-identity, both by excluding “undesirable” social populations (e.g., those who are poor, illiterate or lacking in education) and exempting specific groups (e.g., migrants from the U.S., Canada, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, etc.) from such requirements. This has a significant ethnocultural impact on who is allowed even the possibility of belonging. While such policies beg the question of whether culture is a legitimate criterion for regulating immigration, they may be also be seen as reinforcing a specific understanding or idea of the nation—an ongoing nation-building project.



According to Güalp (2006), it is important to recognize that the process of nation-building necessitates the creation of minority populations that differ from the population exercising sovereignty in terms of culture, language, ethnicity, and/or religion. This is a continuous process and may involve migrants or previously established populations and occurs in both newly-formed states engaging in initial nation-building activities as well as established states reinforcing symbolic borders and national conceptions of who belongs within the state. For Antonsich (2016), this reinforcement may be accomplished through political speech. In examining the so-called “civic turn” in citizenship policy in Italy, Antonsich (2016) describes how the political speech of elected officials of the Italian political right is used to reinforce state boundaries and symbolically preserve the powers reserved to the ethnocultural majority.

Political speech is also part of the ongoing nation-building project in that it can strengthen an institutionalized understanding of the national identity or seek to rewrite it in more (or less) inclusive terms. This type of political speech—that related to immigration, citizenship, and the boundaries of the state—cannot help but impact bureaucratic officials involved in the naturalization process regardless of whether or not it leads to legislative or regulatory changes. This is because—in addition to their policy making role—bureaucratic officials involved in

naturalization play a key function in maintaining or reinforcing the boundaries of citizenship; political speech is one factor defining the context in which officials make their decisions.⁵

Defining membership within the state affects citizens' self-identity, rights and interests; thus membership within the state is a reflection of culture, political will, economic interests, markets and international institutions (Brubaker, 1992; Jacobson, 1996; Joppke, 1998; Kymlicka & Norman, 1994). From the perspective of the state and society, the question then becomes: who "deserves" membership within the state and the associated benefits? This issue of deservingness may be linked to national self-understanding and identity, political and cultural factors which affect political institutions, and state policies allowing the state access to members that maintain the nation-state itself (Marshall, 1963) and provide the resources for state self-reproduction (Torpey, 2000). This research situates the question of who "deserves" citizenship by examining the role of bureaucratic discretion in making this determination.

2.3 *Factors influencing naturalization aspirations*

According to Kymlicka and Norman (1994, p. 352), "citizenship is intimately linked to ideas of individual entitlement on the one hand and of attachment to a particular community on the other." As a legal status that grants participatory political and economic rights, citizenship is a complex notion with meaning both for the state and the individual.⁶ For the state, there is an interest in ensuring a clear boundary between citizens and non-citizens to ensure that only citizens benefit from the associated rights and entitlements. The act of naturalization also serves as an opportunity for the state to make certain demands of would-be citizens that are not required of native-born

⁵ An investigation of the effect of political speech on bureaucratic official decision-making is, unfortunately, not possible within the scope of this research as it focuses on applicants' experiences with the naturalization process, not the bureaucracy itself. While potentially a fruitful avenue for future research, given proper operationalization of the variable, such is not possible at this time. One effect of the attempted coup of July 15, 2016, was limiting public access to bureaucratic officials, making such research extremely difficult; this is discussed further in Chapter 3, section 3.5 Limitations.

⁶ This research focuses on citizenship as a legal status within a state, while recognizing that the words "citizen" and "citizenship" can have multiple meanings (see, for example, Smith, 2002). Unfortunately, a full discussion of the possible meanings of citizenship, both for the state and the individual, is beyond the scope of this work.

citizens, which may include oaths of loyalty, assimilation (or integration to a specific level), language fluency, and/or conformity with particular norms and beliefs in applicants' personal lives and habits (see, for example, Bauböck (2006a), Kraler (2006), Orgad (2016), Piller (2001), etc.). Because international marriage migration is unique in that the marriage itself forms the basis for either permanent residence or citizenship status—a status that may not be open to many others—the state takes an active role in scrutinizing international marriages for “worthiness” as a condition for either or both immigration and citizenship. As such, international marriage migrants may face additional state demands related to marriage practices and child-rearing (for examples of this in practice, see Alexander (Alexander, 2013), Blackledge (2016), Brettell (2017), Chee et al. (2014), Cole (2014), de Leeuw and van Wichelen (2012), Kim and Kilkey (2017), Pellander (2015), Robinson (2007), Williams (2010), etc.).

While Brubaker's (1990, p. 380) ideal-typical model of nation-state citizenship argues that “profane attitudes toward membership, involving calculations of personal advantage, are profoundly inappropriate” in citizenship decisions, this does not reflect the messy reality of naturalization where pragmatic and ideological concerns may overlap, conflict, and/or complement each other. According to Kraler (2006), there are three types of factors that affect migrants' propensity to naturalize: those related to the country of residence (e.g., immigration and citizenship regime, precariousness of status), country of origin factors (dual citizenship availability, political and economic context, etc.), and individual migrant characteristics (including age, sex, occupational status, ties to the host country, etc.). Similarly, Dronkers and Vink's (2012) three strands of explanations, which maintains a macro focus with the legal or formal perspective, socioeconomic perspective, and cultural perspective, highlight the importance of socio-economic factors in the decision to naturalize. Specifically, Dronkers and Vink (2012) found that variables related to socio-economic conditions in the country of origin and cultural factors were more important than the overall policy context of citizenship access in determining naturalization rates; while the accessibility of citizenship matters, it is less important than other factors. While comparative studies of naturalization rates should be taken cautiously due to differences in how states measure and report related data (see, for example, Haller & Yanaşmayan, 2023), they have provided a wealth of information on potential factors and emphasized the importance of recognizing the role of multiple interrelated factors, which may include seeking greater financial

security (Graeber, 2016), other pragmatic concerns such as access to social, economic or political rights (e.g., equal treatment, family reunification, ability to change employers or vote) (Bauböck, 2006b; Kraler, 2006), intangible benefits of status and upward mobility (Graeber, 2016), the effect of spousal naturalization (Helgertz & Bevelander, 2017) and feelings of belonging and commitment to the host state (Aptekar, 2016; Graeber, 2016; Kraler, 2006; Piller, 2001; Wunderlich, 2002). Conversely, people may choose not to naturalize based on similar reasons, particularly retaining rights in the home state or as a symbolic marker of ethnonational identity (Bauböck, 2006b) and insufficient feelings of belonging to the host state (Andrejuk, 2016), which may be caused (or increased) by the politicization and securitization of immigration and naturalization.

Irrespective of residents' naturalization aspirations, the state establishes the legal and regulatory framework in which naturalization may occur. This framework serves as an expression and reinforcement of the national identity. At the same time, it is also affected by domestic and international politicization and securitization of immigration and naturalization. As Hollifield and Wong (2015) note, there has been a significant amount of debate around whether widespread international migration poses an existential threat to state sovereignty and integrity, as it can present challenges related to national security and/or the national identity. While this debate has not fully been resolved, the characterization of international migration and citizenship as a potential threat has become more widespread over the past few decades. Concurrently, these issues have become more politicized in the wake of immigration surges linked to social, political, economic, and/or environmental upheavals around the world. In response to these challenges, the state make seek to reinforce its literal and/or symbolic borders. In the case of Turkey, for example, we can see the politicization and securitization of marriage-based naturalization in response to domestic and international factors (see, for example, Bloch, 2011, 2017; Pusch, 2012; Toksöz & Ulutaş, 2012 and discussion in Chapter 4). Marriages with “Russian” women were particularly subject to public backlash and politicization, including “discourses on how post-Soviet women were destroying Turkish families” (Bloch, 2017, p. 127).⁷ This was accompanied by growing securitization of marriage-based naturalization as the belief that “Russian” women were engaged

⁷ See Chapter 4 for more information on the stigmatization so-called “Russian” women.

in fake marriages, prostitution, and/or other illicit/illegal activities became widespread (Bellér-Hann, 1995; Bloch, 2017; Hacaoğlu, 2002).

For the most part, the question of who is or is not interested in and able to naturalize has been dominated by the European and settler states. There is little scholarship regarding citizenship aspirations when it comes to South-South or North-South immigration, let alone marriage-based naturalization in these contexts. By surveying and interviewing foreigners married to Turkish citizens, I examine these questions outside of the European and settler state contexts, in a state that has nevertheless been affected by growth in politicization and securitization of marriage-based naturalization.

2.4 The multi-faceted impacts of gender on marriage-based naturalization

For the state, performance of a specific female gender role plays a significant role in nation-building. Yuval-Davis (1996), for example, notes that the central myth of a nation is that of a common origin; this is only possible through women's reproductive role; one joins the collective by virtue of being born into it. Nationalistic projects that affect (or even override) women's own preferences toward childbearing then become part of women's responsibilities toward their ethnic or national collectives (Yuval-Davis, 1996). De Hart (2015a) agrees that part of women's role in nation-building is inherently related to reproduction. Without biological reproduction, the nation-state cannot continue to exist and, further, relationships with racial or ethnic "others" that might result in children could pose a threat to the national identity (de Hart, 2015a).

The issue of gender, as related to reproduction and nation-building, becomes particularly salient when combined with immigration and marriage. Frequently, women who marry into a collective—or at least any resulting children—are implicitly assumed to be part of it. In Japan, for example, the issue of reproduction dominates and there is sharp criticism of foreign women who do not have children after marrying Japanese men (Le Bail, 2017). The same is not necessarily true for men. While the caregiving role of female international marriage migrants is assumed by the state, men's families are frequently seen as marginal to their lives; for men with only family claims to permanent residence, emotional attachments to their children or involvement in caregiving roles is insufficient to overcome barriers to legal status (Wray, 2015).

The assigned female role in nation-building extends beyond biological reproduction and into ideological and cultural reproduction of the nation-state. The family serves as the primary location for education about and the reproduction of social order, with the wife implicitly serving as the home instructor (Parisi, 2015; Richardson & Turner, 2001). It is with this in mind that South Korea has invested heavily in policies and programs targeted at marriage migrants believing that (female) marriage migrants' failure to integrate puts the South Korean family and society at risk (G. Kim & Kilkey, 2017). Marriage migrants to South Korea are expected to not only increase the Korean-born population, but also assimilate into Korean society and reproduce Korean culture by taking care of elders and engage in child rearing and education—to be a good Korean wife (Cheng, 2011; M. Kim, 2013; Moon, 2015). In Japan, as in Korea, language learning materials specifically focus on child-rearing activities, ignoring the workplace or other spheres of activity (J. Kim & Kwon, 2012; Le Bail, 2017; Moon, 2015). State support programs for migrant women in South Korea similarly focus on their role in reproducing the nation-state regardless of citizenship status (Cheng, 2011; J. Kim & Kwon, 2012; N. H.-J. Kim, 2012). At the same time, however, the ethno-racial state policy of South Korea has ensured that children of South Korean women with non-Korean men were seen as non-Korean; this practice of national identity has only recently begun to change after decades of producing and reproducing a discriminatory legal and sociocultural structure that had significant impacts on feelings of belonging to the nation-state (M. Kim, 2010; Lim, 2010).

While South Korea focuses on assimilating international marriage migrants, predominantly women, immigration visa requirements and/or citizenship tests in many European states are primarily aimed at excluding women from outside the E.U. or other countries of the Global North (Bonjour & de Hart, 2013; de Leeuw & van Wichelen, 2012). Germany, for example, requires a language test prior to approval of a spousal visa, which has significant impacts on women from Morocco who are more likely to be illiterate than men and who may not be able to afford the time and distance required to take language courses and pass the exam (Gutekunst, 2015). Further, spouses from the E.U. are exempt from this requirement, as are those from countries of “long standing and close relations” (i.e., the U.S.A., Canada, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Brazil, Honduras and Israel) (Gutekunst, 2015, p. 541). In the U.K., citizenship tests serve to exclude “...the most vulnerable migrants from the poorest parts of the globe,”

particularly women who “...not only have the lowest literacy levels, but tend to occupy the most vulnerable migrant statuses, are less likely to be able to access ESOL classes, have fewer financial resources and are more likely to be engaged in unrecognized and unacknowledged citizenship practices (Morrice, 2017, p. 606). In Norway, access to a spousal visa requires that the Norwegian citizen (assumed to be male) meet specific subsistence requirements, which has reified the “breadwinner” role of men who import spouses (Eggebo, 2010), while at the same time imposing additional controls on marriage between a local woman and a foreign man—particularly ones from the Indian subcontinent (Eggebo, 2013; Muhleisen et al., 2012).

As Williams (2010) notes, marriage defines the limits of a collectivity—who can and cannot belong. Piller (1999), for example, found that women who marry outside the “collective” (e.g., someone of a different nationality) are frequently no longer seen as fully part of their native national community. This perspective has had significant social and legal impacts. In the Netherlands for example, as part of a strategy to ensure that migrant men could not become part of the nation-state, from 1892 to 1964 women lost their Dutch citizenship upon marriage to a foreign national, and Dutch women could not pass along their citizenship to their children until 1985 (de Hart, 2006). This loss of Dutch citizenship for a woman was predicated on the idea of her alienation from her society, which was expressed in her preference in terms of national belonging through marriage; state policy sought to ensure immigrant men would not be able to become part of the Dutch nation-state by expatriating women (Bonjour & de Hart, 2013; de Hart, 2006). The Netherlands is far from alone in this respect. Similar legal principles were followed in Argentina and the United States through the 20th century, as well as elsewhere around the world until the early 21st century (see, for example, Abrams, 2013; Augustine-Adams, 2002; Pellander, 2015; Sherlock, 2009; Stalford et al., 2009). At the same time, economic restructuring and insecurity over the last several decades have led to women predominating in migratory flows from Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Philippines, as well as contributing to the gendered composition of family migration and related state policies (e.g., points-based systems and family reunification requirements favor male migrants) (Charsley & Wray, 2015; Currie, 2009; Kofman, 2004, 2005; Ryabov, 2016; Williams, 2010; Yeoh et al., 2013).

While the wording of derivative domicile laws has been changed in a number of states in favor of more gender-neutral language, the impact of citizenship laws remain significantly gendered (Pellander, 2015; Sherlock, 2009; Stalford et al., 2009). In Taiwan, for example, eligibility criteria for permanent residence and employment permits vary by gender, thereby disadvantaging the male spouse of female citizens (Chee et al., 2014). In Singapore, foreign domestic workers are denied reproductive rights while immigrant wives are not permitted to work, remaining dependent on short term or long term visit passes because marriage does not necessarily qualify a migrant spouse for permanent residence or citizenship (Yeoh et al., 2013). By comparison, in Turkey until 2003, female international marriage migrants automatically gained citizenship but male spouses were not permitted to naturalize based on the marriage (Çiçekli, 2006). This is similar to the case in South Korea, where female international marriage migrants lost the right to automatic citizenship in the same year that the male spouse was finally permitted to naturalize (M. Kim, 2013; Williams, 2010).

As access to citizenship increasingly requires proof of integration with the host society, gender remains a problematized category. In some states, women are seen as more assimilable (see, for example, Cheng, 2011; J. Kim & Kwon, 2012; Moon, 2015), while in others the presence of a migrant family—generally assumed to be the wife and child(ren) of the primary (male) migrant—is seen as an obstacle to integration (Alexander, 2013; de Leeuw & van Wichelen, 2012; Fernandez, 2013). Even as individual primary migrants, women may not be considered candidates for migration because they are more resource intensive; immigration criteria is related to ideas of social citizenship, and migrant women are considered to be greater consumers of welfare and state resources (Sherlock, 2009). Immigrant women's reproduction is thus politicized and an area of state concern (Brettell, 2015; Yeoh et al., 2013).

For male marriage migrants, the situation can be even more complex. Gendered (and ethnicized) access to naturalization through marriage—resulting from both explicit policy and discretionary decision-making—occurs without regard to social class, ethnicity or education level and is often accompanied by political speech depicting foreign men as preying on vulnerable women or oppressing family members (Charsley & Liversage, 2015; Charsley & Wray, 2015; Obinna, 2017; Parisi, 2015; Pellander, 2015; Ryabov, 2016; Sherlock, 2009; Williams, 2010; Wray,

2015). This frequently results in male marriage migrants being subject to extra levels of state suspicion, despite differences between immigrants from varying ethnic groups and states (Boyle et al., 2009; Niedomysl et al., 2010; Williams, 2010).⁸ In addition to this, male international marriage migrants may find themselves in the unenviable position of dependency and vulnerability typically reserved for women in terms of access to wage labor, social opportunities and self-sufficiency, representing challenges to their (self)conceptions of masculinity (Charsley & Liversage, 2015; Charsley & Wray, 2015).

My research examines the naturalization process for marriage-based citizenship in Turkey. Using data obtained from an online survey and semi-structured interviews, I examine how Turkey fits into the literature regarding gender and citizenship. Assuming that women predominate this stream of would-be citizens, as in other countries, are there also integration/assimilation requirements that may discriminate against certain populations? Do there appear to be gendered expectations by the state in terms of reproductive roles? Examining these questions from the applicants' perspective helps fill in gaps in the literature related to the context of Turkey as a marriage migration destination state in terms of how gender may affect the naturalization process.

2.5 *The bureaucracy: Discretionary scrutiny*

In the context of naturalized citizenship, street-level bureaucrats serve as gatekeepers to membership in the nation-state through front-line decision-making and policy interpretation (Alpes & Spire, 2014; Bastien, 2009; Evans, 2016; Evans & Harris, 2006; Kosar, 2011; Lipsky, 2010). Because of their intermediary role between the state and the citizen, Lipsky (2010, p. 4) argues these individuals "...hold the keys to a dimension of citizenship." In the case of those who seek to naturalize, bureaucratic officials are key to citizenship itself, but are rarely included in examinations of the process. With the exception of Satzewich (2014), most of the literature regarding citizenship, cross-border marriage migration, and the state does not explicitly incorporate research on street-level bureaucracy. While a focus on the U.S. and Global North

⁸ For example, the majority of Filipino spousal immigration to the U.K. has long consisted of men, but male spouses of female citizens were only permitted entry at the discretion of immigration officials until 1974 (Charsley & Liversage, 2015; Wray, 2015).

predominate within the literature, studies by Carte (2017) and Henderson, Țiclău, and Balica (2017) have demonstrated the applicability of the street-level bureaucracy lens to other contexts. While recognizing the distinction between street-level bureaucrats and managers articulated by Lipsky (2010), I follow Evans (2016) in arguing that bureaucratic officials—from the street-level through the higher ranks of career public servants—all exercise significant amounts of discretion in policy implementation that may complement or conflict with official policies set by policymakers.

The decisions made by bureaucratic officials regarding the potential for naturalization are indicative of both formal state policy and more informal understandings of the nation. Cross-border marriage migrants are seen, *by virtue of their marriage alone*, as prospective or even quasi members of the state (legal status notwithstanding) because the marriage itself forms the basis for permanent residence or naturalization and the attendant rights of that status (Abrams, 2013; Balakrishnan, 1999; Bendix, 1996; Brubaker, 1992; D'Aoust, 2013; Howard, 2009; Kovacs & Toth, 2009). For D'Aoust (2013), this tension over immigration is related to tensions within liberal conceptions of citizenship—the right to love is taken as given but becomes contentious in the ways it is combined with other claims, such as claims to rights. Thus the state's interest is in risk management regarding rights and citizenship through the discipline of specific migration flows (Chee et al., 2014; D'Aoust, 2013). In practice, state scrutiny of marriage migration functions as both state control over national identity and control over immigration. States thus have a vested interest in controlling international marriage migration. Policies governing naturalization through marriage are part of nation-building activities that seek to institutionalize and/or reify a specific understanding of the nation; this is an ongoing process that may be challenged by migration, particularly cross-border marriage migration by individuals with significantly different values and lifestyles that may undermine the self-conception of the state (Bonjour & de Hart, 2013; Brubaker, 1992; Castles, 2014; Cole, 2014; Moon, 2015; Orgad, 2016). As Pellander (2015) notes, marriage migration challenges both national norms and boundaries, intersecting with societal understandings of how people ought to live their family life. The state then creates moral boundaries based on its interest in ensuring conformity with national identity and practices, thus shaping relationships according to the national agenda and investigating intimate aspects of marriage migrants' lives (Williams, 2010). For Kofman (2004) as well, state control over migration is strongly related to state definitions of “family;” this forces incoming migrants to

conform to specific gender roles and understandings of what exactly constitutes a “family member,” which is often limited to solely the nuclear family, as opposed to the extended family more common in other parts of the world (Cole, 2014; Eggebo, 2013; Muhleisen et al., 2012; Mustasaari, 2015, 2017).

As noted by both Cole (2014) and Williams (2010), international marriage migration may serve as a proxy for greater family or community migration, contesting both national understandings of identity and migration management. Therefore, the imposition of formal prerequisites of cultural assimilation, language and financial conditions for entry, or specific types of citizenship tests may serve both to reinforce national self-identity and to exclude “undesirable” populations (Alexander, 2013; Blackledge, 2016; Bonjour & de Hart, 2013; de Hart, 2006; de Leeuw & van Wichelen, 2012; Eggebo, 2010, 2013; Gutekunst, 2015; Morrice, 2017; Muhleisen et al., 2012; Pellander, 2015; Sherlock, 2009). Blackledge (2016) agrees, in that international marriage migration creates a migration opportunity for those who might not otherwise be admitted, presenting a challenge to state migration control. As Robinson (2007) notes, the regulation of migration itself creates the need for and regulation of spousal migration. For Williams (2010), however, the potential migrant’s status as *spouse* and *dependent* then become the defining characteristics for the state.

As a result of these state concerns, discourse surrounding “fake” marriages, “gray” marriages or marriages of convenience have arisen, with discourse suggesting that immigrants will use marriage to access scarce state resources, including the labor market and social welfare programs (de Hart, 2015a; Faier, 2007; Shen, 2017). Female international marriage migrants are frequently depicted as utilizing their youth or sexuality to gain access to the state, while male international marriage migrants are constructed as opportunistically taking advantage of native women (de Hart, 2015a). However in some states, particularly in East Asia, marriage may be the only way to ensure permanent settlement or citizenship (Williams, 2010). Thus the state seeks to ensure that international marriage migration is not a “backdoor” to labor migration through forcing potential migrants (citizens) to prove personal commitment, emotional involvement (Williams, 2010) or the quality or “worthiness” of their marriage (Faier, 2007; Kathryn Robinson, 2007). At the same time, changes in state migration policies may indirectly push women to seek the

protection of marriage as a means of continuing to work beyond tourist visas, provide a way to break out of circular migration patterns, or provide a safer means of migration (Bloch, 2011; Williams, 2010). The state demonstrates such a concern with “pragmatic” marriages with foreigners that is not demonstrated in marriage between two natives, which assumes that desires for love and family can be separated from desires for safety, security and adequate prosperity in the case of foreign relationships (Williams, 2010).

The goal of protecting European states from “marriages of convenience,” defined as “marriages contracted for the sole purpose of enjoying the right of free movement and residence under [Directive 2004/38/EC] that someone would not have otherwise,” has led to the creation of the E.U. Handbook on Fighting Marriages of Convenience to provide guidance to immigration authorities in distinguishing between real marriages and marriages of convenience (Töttös, 2015). In practice, in distinguishing between “real” and “fake” marriages, migrant spouses are tested by bureaucratic officials against various norms that may depend on stereotypes regarding migrant’s state of origin and age, with relationships that appear atypical for the country of origin more likely to be rejected, creating axes of discrimination along the lines of both gender and ethnicity (Bonjour & Block, 2016; Bonjour & de Hart, 2013; Eggebo, 2013; Pellander, 2015; Williams, 2010). Criteria may include the motive or purpose of the marriage, and immigrants are often questioned (individually or simultaneously) about sex life practices, private conduct and beliefs, and social differences between spouses (Muhleisen et al., 2012; Wray, 2015; Yeoh et al., 2013). Applicants naturalizing through marriage may also be subject to home visits and information requests of third parties who may be called upon to certify the “authenticity” of the marriage (Eggebo, 2013; Parisi, 2015; Töttös, 2015). Narratives of romantic love and intimacy are utilized to both determine and prove the legitimacy of a relationship (Cole, 2014; Eggebo, 2013; Fernandez, 2013; Fernandez & Jensen, 2014). The standard of proof is often very high and migrants spouses may be met with extreme skepticism, resulting in denial of visa or citizenship; male spouses in particular remain more likely to be denied in various contexts (Cole, 2014; Leinonen & Pellander, 2014; Wray, 2015).

My research applies the lens of bureaucratic discretion to Turkey, which has not yet occurred within the literature. Aydinli (Aydinli, 2010), for example, questions whether Western

conceptualizations of the “state” can even be transferred to parts of the developing world that have significant security concerns, referring to a dual-governance structure that consists of an autonomous “state” bureaucracy and a political “government.” Aras and Yorulmazlar (2018) also reference the ongoing conflict between the bureaucracy and the government, which has caused a deficit in the state structural capacity and a lack of institutionalization, as well as problems with state performance and bureaucratic implementation. The constitutional change following the failed 2015 coup attempt was meant, in part, to sideline bureaucratic resistance (Aras & Yorulmazlar, 2018). At the same time, however, they argue that the bureaucracy sees itself as the protector of the founding principles (Aras & Yorulmazlar, 2018). As such, one would expect bureaucratic discretion to play an important role in Turkey. While a centralized state, there is nevertheless discretion in bureaucratic officials’ work, from frontline decision-making to policy interpretation. Decisions made by officials regarding naturalization applications may be seen as reflecting both formal state policy and more informal understandings of who should be permitted to naturalize. In examining the case of Turkey, I take a bottom-up approach to examining the impact these informal understandings have on naturalization through marriage in Turkey.

2.6 Conclusion

Nation-building, as an ongoing process, reinforces specific identities and gender roles within the moral boundaries delineated by the state. In the context of Turkey, these identities are related to ethnicity and religion. The state has an interest in defining who deserves membership, which is inextricably linked to the maintenance and reproduction of the nation-state and its identity, making naturalization part of the ongoing nation-building project and linked to a particular understanding of the national identity. As gatekeepers of the Turkish national identity, bureaucratic officials are not only charged with implementing official citizenship policies (e.g., legislation and regulations) but also create them through the everyday application of discretion—i.e., professional judgement—in the naturalization application process. This bureaucratic discretion has been observed elsewhere to have disparate effects along the axes of gender and ethnicity, resulting in discriminatory access to citizenship. While there has been limited research on the use of bureaucratic discretion in Turkey, there has been no discussion on how it may be used in support of specific understandings of the national identity. Given the role the ethno-religious understanding

of the Turkish identity has played in Turkish immigration and other policies to date (see Chapter 4), this is an important gap I aim to fill.

Taking the idea of marriage-as-belonging and the assumption that the national identity of a state is reinforced through who it permits to become a citizen, I examine the naturalization process for marriage-based citizenship in Turkey from the perspective of the applicant. As marriage-based applicants face fewer requirements to naturalize, bureaucratic discretion has the potential to create unofficial policies of eligibility in contravention of official policy. Examining the naturalization process from the applicant's perspective helps highlight how this may occur in practice. This novel, applicant-centered perspective, along with a broader examination of marriage-based naturalization in Turkey—one not limited to a particular ethnic group—helps address gaps in the literature related to Turkey as a destination state for international marriage migrants and the use of bureaucratic discretion related to the Turkish national identity.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 *Introduction*

In this section, I describe my approach to my primary research question—whether and how the national understanding of the Turkish identity impacts the process of marriage-based naturalization—with reference to the opportunities and challenges of studying this process. Further, I explain the mixed methods approach I have taken to examine my hypothesis that bureaucratic discretion is used during the process of naturalization in support of specific understandings of the national identity. In the following sections, I address my case selection, the need for a mixed methods approach, and the methods selected. I then delineate how this research addressed the ethical concerns and practical issues of researching the sensitive topic of citizenship.

3.2 *Case selection and research questions*

Despite the apparent simplicity of naturalization application procedures, each step in the application process involves decision-making by officials who can facilitate the naturalization process or create barriers for applicants. When it comes to the naturalization process itself, the so-called “regular” naturalization process typically requires applicants meet requirements that may include language fluency, integration, and so on. Because these requirements are not imposed upon those applying for citizenship through marriage, this research focuses on the marriage-based naturalization pathway. In doing so, it seeks to bypass these other requirements to illustrate the role of bureaucratic discretion in the naturalization process—potentially facilitating or obstructing access to citizenship through marriage—after changes to the Turkish citizenship law in 2003 and 2009. In Turkey, the only legally recognized form of marriage is between one man and one woman. Because this is an examination of the acquisition of a legal status, this research solely examines non-polygamous, heterosexual marriages.

In recognition of the importance given to various issues within the literature related to marriage migration and citizenship—particularly how immigration and/or naturalization policies may be instrumentalized to reinforce a specific understanding of the nation and/or national identity

and bureaucratic discretion employed in service of this understanding—from the general to the specific, this research, as stated in the Introduction, examines the following questions:

- Does the national understanding of the Turkish identity impact the process of marriage-based naturalization? How?
 - What are applicants' experiences with bureaucratic decision-making and discretion during the process of marriage-based naturalization?
 - Do demographic factors, particularly those related to contested aspects of the Turkish identity, impact applicants' naturalization process?
 - Have discretionary decisions led to informal policies⁹ of citizenship eligibility based on specific understandings of the Turkish national identity?

Taking a pragmatic approach that draws from both qualitative and quantitative assumptions, I utilize a mixed methods strategy that centers applicants' experiences in the naturalization application process. On the quantitative side, I examine statistical data and selected data obtained from an online survey; on the qualitative side, I present data from in-depth, semi-structured interviews with successful and unsuccessful marriage-based naturalization applicants, as well as attorneys and consultants who work with this population. I examine the statistical and online survey data for naturalization patterns related to demographic characteristics such as age, sex, income level, and education. Based on my knowledge of the Turkish context and international marriage migration literature, I would not be surprised by some level of disparate treatment between applicants of different backgrounds, such as applicants of a Kurdish or non-Sunni Muslim background facing more difficulty in naturalizing as a legacy of former Turkish immigration and citizenship policies or female applicants from Russia facing more difficulty in naturalizing due to bureaucratic officials' skepticism toward these relationships (see Chapter 4 for discussions of this history and the current Turkish context). I also compare applicants' reported experiences in the

⁹ For the purposes of this research, I distinguish between official or formal policy as written policy that may be formally legislated or found in agency policy manuals, employee handbooks, and the like and unofficial, informal, or *de facto* policy as unwritten and comprised of institutionalized collective practices.

marriage-based naturalization application process to official policies in terms of required documentation and application interviews, providing first-hand accounts of the naturalization process as experienced by applicants.

In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss the methodologies of my research design and fieldwork. The first section explains the need for a mixed methods approach, with a specific focus on qualitative analysis. The second section discusses the ethical concerns and practical issues in researching “sensitive” topics and how this affected the research design. Following that, I discuss my research design, the specific tools used for data collection, and why they are suitable for answering my research questions. The final section describes the tools used for data analysis.

3.3 *My approach*

To examine how biases may be present during the naturalization process, I utilize several methods—including analysis of numeric data, an online survey, and in-depth interviews—along with a pragmatic approach. I believe both qualitative and quantitative data are necessary to understanding the experience of applying for naturalization; quantitative data sets the stage while qualitative data adds individuals’ stories, rich with detail. Moreover, my research questions, which include both subjective and objective realities, fit well within the pragmatic paradigm defined by Creswell (2009), wherein researchers are not bound to specific philosophical assumptions but instead “...emphasize the research problem and use all approaches available to understand [it]” (Creswell, 2009).

Because my research locates the use of bureaucratic discretion through applicants’ experiences with it, it is necessary to utilize a mixed methods strategy to corroborate data. Following Fetter and Molina-Azorin (2016, p. 5), I define mixed methods research as a subset of multi-method research that includes “a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches” and analysis. The use of mixed methods and a pragmatic approach are necessary to answer my research questions. Along with Morgan (2014), I recognize the importance of integrating these approaches with one another throughout. In this research, sources of data collection include statistical data, survey data, and interview data; both qualitative and quantitative analysis of these data are undertaken to provide evidence of applicants’ experiences with marriage-based

naturalization. Quantitative data plays a role in locating potential patterns that may be inductively determined from qualitative data. At the same time, qualitative data obtained through surveys and one-on-one interviews provides insights into interactions between applicants and officials that simply do not exist in quantitative form.

In fieldwork research, it is also important to be aware of the underlying epistemologies and biases of particular methodologies. As many scholars have noted, research design is inextricably linked to specific philosophical and methodological assumptions (Bazeley, 2013; Creswell, 2007, 2009; May & Perry, 2014; Prasad, 2005; Shkedi, 2019; Spencer et al., 2014). Della Porta and Keating (2008), for example, identify four general approaches to social science research—positivist, post-positivist, interpretivist, and humanistic—that express divides in social science research along two ontological and two epistemological axes. These four approaches may be combined in various ways but tend to favor particular methodologies. In qualitative research, for example, the researcher often emphasizes reality as “constructed” or “subjective and multiple” (Creswell, 2007; Iosifides, 2018; Prasad, 2005), mapping to della Porta and Keating’s (2008) interpretivist and humanistic approaches. For Bryman (2004, p. 61), the defining characteristic of qualitative research “...is its express commitment to viewing events, action, norms, values, etc. from the perspective of the people who experience them in everyday life,” thus highlighting the importance of multiple lived realities. For Green and Thorogood (2004), however, qualitative research is defined by its focus on the questions of how, why, and what. And for Shkedi (2019), qualitative research is that which includes both intuitive and analytical human research skills and is characterized by using language as the medium of research. In quantitative research designs, the foundational paradigm emphasizes numeric measurements, “value-free” objectivity, and verifying or refining theory (Creswell, 2009; Iosifides, 2018; Shkedi, 2019), mapping to della Porta and Keating’s (2008) positivist and post-positivist approaches, which tend to seek causal relationships through the logic of inference. While I have adopted a pragmatic approach and a mixed method strategy, I rely upon and emphasize the importance of qualitative methodologies and epistemologies. As I explain in the following sections, this is partly due to the research context but primarily results from the research questions themselves. Determining whether and how bureaucratic discretion is used in support of a particular understanding of the national identity

necessitates understanding applicants' experiences and the meanings ascribed by applicants themselves—a goal best undertaken through qualitative analyses.

3.4 *Research design*

My research design consists of overlapping components, including analysis of statistical data, an online migrant survey, and semi-structured interviews with individuals who have—successfully or unsuccessfully—applied for naturalization through marriage as well as with consultants and attorneys who assist with this process. These overlapping components serve multiple purposes. My examination of available statistical data helps contextualize responses to my online survey. The online survey also functioned to create a pool of potential interviewees who naturalized at different times and were interested in participating in an interview about their experiences. This allowed me to gather demographic and naturalization data from this (non-representative) sample of immigrant spouses and consider changes over time. The resulting semi-structured interviews illuminated individuals' experiences, highlighting specific challenges faced in the naturalization process. Finally, interviews with consultants and attorneys who assist in this process provided a wider perspective of the more general types of obstacles and facilitators immigrant spouses may encounter and general trends they have observed within their professional practice. Each of these tools contributes to my inquiry, adding layers of information to form a better picture of who naturalizes and what facilitators and/or obstacles they may experience.

3.4.1 *Statistical data*

To examine various demographic characteristics of naturalization applicants, I sought data from the Turkish Statistical Institute (Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu, TÜİK) regarding immigrant marriage, marriage-based naturalization, and province of residence from 1990-present. While some TÜİK data is available online regarding immigrant demographics, it is limited. Available information on the TÜİK website includes breakdowns by sex, origin and/or province, but does not give any indication of naturalization rates. Similarly, yearly press releases from TÜİK indicate the top three foreign nationalities (male and female) marrying Turkish citizens but lack naturalization information. Official data is limited, but upon an official request to TÜİK, I was provided with statistical data for the top 10 countries of those obtaining citizenship according to sex and

nationality (2000-2011). From the TÜİK website, I was also able to obtain data regarding the number of marriages by citizenship and sex (2009-2021), and foreign population membership as of 2019—the year fieldwork was conducted. This official statistical data is compared with the demographic data of online survey respondents using Microsoft Excel (2023) to determine totals and percentages. This helps provide insight into the Turkish context and the ways in which survey respondents are—and are not—similar to the overall immigrant and Turkish populations.

3.4.2 *Online survey*

An online survey for immigrants married to Turkish citizens was created in 2018 using Qualtrics (2020), pilot tested in January 2019, and made available to the public from February to December 2019. Of the 643 responses to the online survey, 389 (342 women, 47 men) were deemed potentially usable (e.g., foreigners married to Turks, completed at least a majority of the survey, etc.). Data from the survey was downloaded from Qualtrics (2020) and prepared for analysis. Quantitative data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel (2023), which allowed analytical procedures such as calculations of subtotals and percentages of respondents in various groups or with particular characteristics. Data for qualitative analysis were exported to NVivo (2022) using Survey Import Wizard and according to instructions in Bazeley and Johnson (2013) and QSR International (2022). Initial codes came from responses to survey questions (e.g., country of origin, sex, etc.). Additional qualitative analysis codes were posited based on themes from the literature (e.g., identity, fake marriage, bureaucratic discretion, etc.) prior to importing survey and interview data, with additional codes created and applied to the survey data as necessary.

The creation and distribution of this survey was aimed at two goals. First, it was intended to create a pool of potential respondents for more in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Second, it was intended to gain additional demographic information about those who had married Turkish citizens, including religious background, family income level, Turkish language skill, and so forth, in order to look for common themes in the application process.

While denigrated by Patton (2002), the use of a convenience sample is appropriate for multiple reasons. First, there are gaps in the available statistical data from TÜİK regarding the rate of naturalization through marriage, making the actual population more difficult to determine.

Second, the population is geographically dispersed; “foreign spouses” are not necessarily visible within the larger Turkish community, nor do they form a cohesive group. While a variety of scholars have discussed the pitfalls of online surveys and other methodologies in terms of varying levels of internet access and use among populations, non-representative samples, and recruiting difficulties, many also recognize it as one of the best ways to reach less visible or geographically dispersed, difficult-to-access, or marginalized communities, as well as those who might not otherwise participate in research due to the inconveniences or constraints of more traditional face-to-face methods (Alessi & Martin, 2010; Best et al., 2001; Lyons et al., 2005; McInroy, 2016; Pascoe, 2011; Pecáková, 2016; Riggle et al., 2005; Willis, 2011). Moreover, when the issue under inquiry is considered to be of a sensitive nature, online data collection can “create a sense of social distance for some target populations, resulting in more open responses” (Lyons et al., 2005, p. 345). Further, recruitment for online surveys may also result in a more diverse sample of the overall population (McInroy, 2016), providing what Patton (2002) terms an “information-rich” perspective. While recognizing the validity of these issues compared to the potential benefits of the online survey, as well as the budget and time constraints, the decision was made to move forward. Notably, the survey was not intended to ensure a demographically representative sample of immigrant spouses. This is partially due to the difficulties associated with ensuring a representative sample of a population that is often invisible but also to obtain information about those whose experiences may differ, including individuals whose applications were denied. The survey data, therefore, provides information about respondents but cannot necessarily be generalized to the larger population of those seeking citizenship through marriage in Turkey.

The survey was available in four languages—English, Turkish, Arabic, and Russian—with the hope of reaching a wide range of migrants who had married Turkish citizens and continued to reside in the country, thereby gaining information regarding a wide range of experiences. These languages were chosen based on the top countries of origin for immigrants naturalizing through marriage (noted in Table 5-1: Top 10 countries of persons obtaining citizenship through marriage, 2000-2011, by gender and nationality). This is a population that is virtually invisible in Turkey. As Pecáková (2016) notes, internet use often varies according to age and income factors; presumably, internet access itself varies along the same axes. I therefore disseminated information and survey invitations using a variety of methods: posts on social media sites Facebook, Twitter,

and V.K., direct and group emails through individual networks, referrals, word of mouth and direct contact. I focused on the cities of Istanbul, Ankara, and Antalya due to their overall population levels, the different types of immigrants they attract, and overall immigrant population density. I printed survey introductions and invitations in all four languages, bringing copies with me to restaurants, bars, and coffee shops—virtually anywhere that served the public—sharing the information with staff and/or posting a flyer.

From February 2019 through December 2019, information about the study and an invitation to the survey were posted (and reposted) in all four languages in various “Groups” (Facebook) or “Communities” (V.K.) based on the posting frequency allowed by each group (see Appendix B for social media and language posting list). Social media sites Facebook and V.K. were chosen because of their reach. Facebook, in particular, is known for its global reach, with more than 2.5 billion users each month, and almost 90% of daily active users are located outside the U.S./Canada (Omnicores, 2020). In Turkey, Facebook is the third most visited website overall; there are 37 million Facebook accounts in Turkey and 56% of people over age 13 use Facebook (BIA News, 2020). However, within Russia and the states of the former U.S.S.R., the native platform V.K. (VKontakte) is used by 83% of active social media users (Prins, 2019). Thus, in order to reach a wide variety of people who are trying to stay in touch with friends and family in their countries of origin, Facebook and V.K. were the logical social media sites to use in soliciting a wider range of potential survey respondents.

Information presented to respondents regarding the study and invitation text both specified that the study was aimed at foreigners who were eligible to apply for Turkish citizenship through marriage, would be eligible in the near future, or who had already obtained Turkish citizenship through marriage. Following Alessi and Martin (Alessi & Martin, 2010), I avoided using overly technical language in the solicitation. Instead, potential respondents were provided with a brief overview of the study—that it was about the process of gaining citizenship through marriage in Turkey—and contained a link to the study itself. The first “question” of the survey provided more detail about the research, my university affiliation, and my supervisor’s information. The second “question” of the survey further informed respondents that their information would remain anonymous and that they had the right to end their participation at any time. This survey utilized

an explicit consent model wherein respondents were informed they would need to click “begin” to be taken to the actual survey. With respect to the survey questions themselves, simpler questions were asked first with more detailed questions occurring later in the survey.

Survey respondents were asked basic demographic questions about themselves and their Turkish partners, including country of origin, level of education, family income level, and Turkish citizenship status (see Appendix C for online survey questions). Those who indicated they had received Turkish citizenship through their marriage or who had already applied were asked about their experience with the naturalization process in terms of the documents they needed to supply, their understanding of the process, and the ease of the process. Respondents who indicated they did not want to obtain Turkish citizenship were asked about their reasons.

Because citizenship can be considered a sensitive topic, survey questions were ordered to help respondents feel comfortable with giving information, and their anonymity was guaranteed from the beginning. Questions such as respondent’s sex, religious background and income level were preceded by more general questions regarding Turkish and other language skills, country of origin and education level. Notably, questions could not be presented randomly, as certain contingency questions were only available to those who had responded in a specific way to filter questions (Barrett, 2008). However, questions were grouped thematically in order to make the survey easier to complete and respondents feel more comfortable (Holyk, 2008; Trobia, 2008). Questions with a Likert response set utilized the traditional five symmetrically balanced categories, plus an option for “don’t know / don’t remember” due to the time frame involved. In order to avoid inadvertently priming respondents, question order was carefully considered; there were no instances where an open-ended question followed a closed-ended question about the same specific topic (Holyk, 2008; Parkin, 2008). For example, while the open-ended question inquiring which year the respondent applied for Turkish citizenship precedes closed-ended questions about the difficulty and clarity of the process, the former should not have a priming effect on the latter two. Question order and wording were reviewed multiple times by university faculty, research assistants, and translators (native English, Turkish, Arabic, and Russian speakers) and extensively discussed to ensure they did not create bias and were understandable across cultural contexts (Gubrium et al., 2012).

In asking about respondents' experience with the citizenship process, questions were asked about respondent's perceived difficulty with the process, as well as more factual questions about the types of documents required. In many questions, respondents were permitted to choose multiple answers and/or add additional information if they felt comfortable doing so. I sought to balance the potential negative impact of open-ended questions through the inclusion of closed-ended, multiple response questions (McInroy, 2016). At the end of the survey, respondents were given the option to be contacted for further interviews, with the understanding that it was not a requirement, and their information would not be shared.

3.4.3 *Semi-structured interviews*

Between March and October 2019, I conducted a total of 25 interviews with immigrants married to Turkish citizens and 10 with attorneys or consultants who work with immigrants.¹⁰ Each interview typically lasted 45-60 minutes and focused on the marriage-based naturalization process and immigrants' experience with it. Respondents were asked for their permission to record the interviews, which were then transcribed and coded. In the few cases where permission was denied, extensive notes were taken, which were then coded in the same manner as the transcripts and analyzed using NVivo (2022). Some interviews with immigrants were conducted in languages other than English. For these interviews, an interpreter was present, and the same procedure was followed regarding recording. Interviews were then transcribed in the language of the interview and translated into English. This two-step process for non-English interviews was followed to help ensure accurate translation. The coding of interview data was an iterative process. Initial codes were developed based on themes from the literature and online survey responses (e.g., fake marriage, process challenges, etc.) and applied to interview transcripts. As additional codes were developed, based on themes shared by respondents (e.g., the importance of children, network connections, employment, etc.), transcripts were freshly examined for applications of each code.

¹⁰ Survey respondents who indicated a willingness to participate in further research were contacted for interviews; only 21 survey respondents, all women, agreed. The remaining three women were recruited via personal contact; the man replied to a social media post seeking interviewees made while conducting fieldwork in Ankara.

Recognizing that “...interviewing, like communication in general, is as much collaboratively constructive of the meanings of experience...” (Gubrium et al., 2012, p. 3), I chose to make semi-structured interviews an integral component of my research methodology and inquiry. As active subjects in the interview, interviewees and the researcher can call forth migrant experiences and understandings of marginalization and empowerment, migrant strategies of representation and negotiation, and the informal, unwritten structures and strictures governing acceptance into a society (Borer & Fontana, 2012; Gubrium & Holstein, 2012). As Platt (2012) further notes, while structured interviews use standardization to enhance reliability, unstructured interviews are more appropriate for discovering possible social patterns. I therefore adopted a semi-structured approach using a standardized introduction and initial questions but largely allowing the respondent to structure the interaction from there. Through the use of open-ended questions, I sought to ensure each respondent’s unique perspective was highlighted as I encouraged them to tell their stories in their own words (Platt, 2012). This allows a bottom-up approach to understanding the barriers and facilitators of the naturalization process, with new perspectives and information.

In addition to the widely recognized challenges of conducting interview research—locating interviewees, interviewee willingness to participate, etc.—conducting cross-cultural research in another language creates the additional potential for error due to linguistic and cultural variations (Bazeley, 2013). I sought to minimize these risks by working closely with native speakers of the target languages, including graduate researchers at MiReKoç, the Migration Research Center at Koç University, and professional translators in target cities. I sought feedback on draft survey and interview questions in the different languages to ensure my intended meaning was clear and culturally applicable.

While there were some practical reasons for the choice of languages used in recruitment, the online survey, and the interview (e.g., language fluencies and availability of research assistants and/or professional translators), I also recognize this decision was based on certain assumptions arising from discussions with colleagues and research assistants. The first assumption was that marriage migrants speaking a language or dialect closely related to one of the languages used—English, Turkish, Arabic, and Russian—would be able to understand and participate in the online

survey. The second assumption followed from the first; that those who could not understand one of the four languages would be able to understand another (presumably Turkish). I recognize this a) privileges specific languages over others and b) ignores the myriad reasons why a marriage migrant might not understand any of the available languages. The decision to proceed with the practical language options available was made with the hope that, if an interested person could not understand any of the available languages, she or he may still choose to participate in the survey using online translation (e.g., Google translate).

Immigrant spouse interviews

Because the naturalization application process changed over time, I sought to interview people who had naturalized or applied for naturalization at different times. I therefore conducted interviews with six women who applied for naturalization prior to 2003, five women who applied 2003-2009 and 14 people (13 women, 1 man) who applied 2010-2019; see Table E-1: Immigrant interviewees. Of these, two naturalization applications were denied, five are still pending, and one was withdrawn. The other 17 applications for naturalization were successful.

In order to locate potential immigrant spouse interviewees, I reviewed online survey responses for those who had indicated they were open to being contacted for an interview; these respondents were emailed individually for scheduling. When contacting potential interviewees, I again introduced myself and asked if they would be available for an interview to discuss their experience with the naturalization process. I assured participants their responses would remain confidential, one component of building trust (Heggen & Guillemin, 2012; Kaiser, 2012). Following James and Busher (2012, p. 182), I answered potential interviewees responses quickly and sought to be “proactive in establishing a permissive and friendly atmosphere” in our pre-interview interactions. Emails to participants were sent in the language in which they had taken the survey, and potential interviewees were asked in which language they would prefer to conduct the interview so that a translator could be present.

During my fieldwork in Istanbul, Ankara and Antalya, I also posted interview requests to Facebook and V.K., in addition to visiting community organizations that might have contact with immigrants to Turkey, such as Orthodox churches and ethnic organizations. I also spent time

walking around, exploring each location and speaking with people because, as Beitin (2012, p. 248) argues, “...face-to-face contact is more engaging than flyers.” Thus, I chatted with waitstaff at restaurants, shop attendants, hotel staff, coffee baristas, and tour guides. Because my knowledge of Turkish is insufficient to conduct a lengthy conversation in the language, I prepared flyers that I could leave with people that summarized my research and the types of respondents I was looking for in English, Turkish, Arabic, and Russian.

One of the most important aspects of my fieldwork was the need to build trust with potential survey respondents and interviewees, which was an ongoing process. I take Williamson’s (2015, p. 18) holistic approach seriously, wherein “migration, the global political economy, civil society, social movements and micro-level cultural and social changes [are] mutually constituted.” Moreover, Grinyer and Thomas (2012, p. 221) argue that interviewees must not only feel a connection with the interviewer but also that “...trust needs to be nurtured and, as with rapport, cannot be taken for granted as a ‘once and for all.’” Keeping these issues in mind, I sought personal introductions and references whenever possible. I made it a point to respond to every comment on my social media posts, even if the information had been given previously. I offered my phone number and email address, expressing my willingness to answer any questions or concerns an individual had—which would remain off the record—either about the survey or a potential interview.

Carter and Bolden (2012) highlight the impact the choice of location has on the information provided by the interviewee and how the interviewee views the interviewer, particularly in terms of insider versus outsider status. Despite this, I also wanted to follow Talmage’s (2012, p. 297) advice that “...it is important for the researcher to conduct interviews in places that allow the respondents to feel comfortable and do not inadvertently make them feel subservient or otherwise ill at ease.” I therefore asked interviewees where and how they would like to speak, whether meeting in person or via phone, Skype, WhatsApp, and so on. Some interviewees choose to meet at a local coffeeshop or restaurant while others preferred to speak via phone. For many interviewees, the choice was a pragmatic one due to distance or time constraints. Interviewees were asked to set a time that would be convenient for them, recognizing the time sacrifice they were choosing to make in participating in my research. Reflecting on Herzog (2012, p. 216), who

argues “[u]sing terms such as comfortable atmosphere, convenience, intimacy, or friendliness as explanations for the choice of interview location depoliticizes the research practice,” I find it notable that only two interviews with immigrant spouses were conducted in an office setting, and none were conducted face-to-face with participants in my office. Meeting interviewees in the field, at their choice of location (or via phone), demonstrated not only my willingness to position myself as the knowledge seeker but also helped demonstrate my relative harmlessness as a researcher despite my relatively privileged position, as discussed later in this section.

A number of scholars have commented on the importance of building a good rapport with interviewees through friendly chit chat and/or shared experiences (see, for example, Beitin, 2012; Grinyer & Thomas, 2012; Heggen & Guillemin, 2012; Johnson & Rowlands, 2012). Semi-structured interviews with immigrants, therefore, began with a bit of light conversation. During the interviews, I would also offer commiseration for difficult experiences and/or share my own experiences with being a foreigner in Turkey. Interviewees were asked to sign the consent form or give verbal consent to the interview at the beginning which provided an opportunity to discuss my interest in the topic with interviewees and to answer questions they might have about me. Through body language and active listening techniques, I encouraged interviewees to elaborate on their responses, including asking respondents to provide examples, expand on what they had said, or describe how they had felt (Lillrank, 2012). In doing so, I sought to obtain not only factual information but a greater understanding of how the processes affected respondents. While some interviewees expressed reservations at the beginning of the interview—either in terms of how they would remain anonymous or how the information would be used—by the end of the interview, all respondents were comfortable with the topic and happy they had decided to discuss their experiences, both good and bad. Many felt this research could prove helpful for future immigrants to understand the process and challenges they might face.

Attorney and consultant interviews

While the survey was active online, and concurrent with conducting respondent interviews, I sought attorneys and consultants working with immigrants—professionals with specific expertise in navigating the naturalization application process—to gain a wider view of the process itself, how policies are implemented, and any changes in the field. Using a combination of Google

searches, foreign embassy websites, and referrals, an initial list of approximately 75 attorneys or consultants was compiled. With the help of a translator, attorney and consultant offices were contacted via phone and/or email to determine suitability and willingness to be interviewed, resulting in ten semi-structured interviews conducted in Istanbul, Ankara, and Antalya; see Table E-2: Attorney/consultant interviewees. Attorneys and consultants predominantly spoke only Turkish; an interpreter was therefore present for these interviews as well. These semi-structured interviews focused on the application process and barriers (or facilitators) applicants may encounter. Attorney and consultant respondents were also asked about trends in marriage-based naturalization, changes they've observed over the years in the process or in interactions with the bureaucracy, their understanding of "public order" as it relates to the disqualification of applicants from citizenship, and how different hypothetical applicants might compare with each other (those who have children, those from different areas, male or female applicants, etc.). Several of the consultants had prior experience with the gendarmerie or police in conducting investigations of citizenship applicants, including those applying through marriage.

Attorneys and consultants working with immigrants have significant contextual knowledge of the marriage-based naturalization process and are generally better positioned to discuss changes over time in terms of the clients they see, the difficulties these clients face, and specific characteristics that might assist in the process or create barriers (Bogner & Menz, 2009). Thus, these semi-structured interviews may be characterized as systematizing expert interviews in that "the focus here is on knowledge of action and experience, which has been derived from practice, is reflexively accessible, and can be spontaneously communicated. This kind of expert interview is an attempt to obtain systematic and complete information" and is an important tool in data triangulation (Bogner & Menz, 2009, p. 47). At the same time, the semi-structured nature of the interview process also allows for "communicative opening up and analytic reconstruction of the subjective dimension of expert knowledge," which are critical in theory-generating expert interviews (Bogner & Menz, 2009, p. 48).

Similar to immigrant spouse interviews, I sought to build rapport with attorneys and consultants prior to conducting the interview. This was generally less intensive than with immigrant spouses; as Bogner, Littig and Menz (2009, p. 2) note, experts and researchers often

share an understanding of the relevance of research on a given topic and experts' own professional achievements can often serve to motivate them to participate in research interviews. With that being said, however—and similar to immigrant spouses—a number of attorneys and consultants were simply not interested in participating in interviews or had concerns regarding how the information might be (mis)used. Attorney and consultant interviewees were most often reassured by my institutional affiliation rather than through a personal connection, different from immigrant spouses. In another striking difference from immigrant spouse interviews, interviews with such “experts” almost universally took place in their offices. The one exception was interviewed in the lobby of the hotel where he was staying in Istanbul on business. This decision of location, made by the interviewees, had the effect of positioning me as the supplicant to their expert role, with the interviewee seated behind her/his desk while the translator and I sat in chairs normally occupied by clients seeking services. This required I “reposition” myself at times, as discussed in the next subsection: Positionality. Moreover, while I hesitate to apply the label of a “good expert” or a “bad expert,” it is worth noting that certain attorneys or consultants were better informed than others with regard to the objective application criteria and more or less willing than others to discuss potential challenges or engage in discussions of what may be viewed as “subjective” criteria and its implications (Gläser & Laudel, 2009). In fact, the only attorney to suggest the potential impacts of political climate on the implementation of immigration and citizenship regulation was the one interviewed outside of the office. Perhaps he felt more comfortable to engage in hypothetical discussions away from his office in giving a less “official” opinion (i.e., one that cannot be mistaken for a legal opinion or advice).

Positionality

Though an immigrant myself, I had to recognize the privileges of my position—a student at a prestigious university with an American passport—and how this might impact interactions with interviewees. People in Turkey (citizens and foreigners alike) often openly asked me what an American was doing in Turkey. The reality of my position as immigrant, a student, and an American had to be addressed.

For many potential respondents, the primary concern was why I, an American, was interested in the topic. Many people initially believed (inaccurately) that I was interested in

conducting research on this topic due to a personal situation (i.e., marriage to a Turkish national). Because I am an American citizen, some potential respondents were worried that I was affiliated with the CIA or somehow sought to access damaging information on Turkey. Others were concerned that the information I collected might be used against them in their naturalization applications or some other manner. Alleviating these concerns meant that trust building was an important part of the process leading up to and during interviews. Explaining how I came to be interested in the topic—my friends’ experiences in South Korea and elsewhere—often provided common ground for discussions on spouses’ experiences in Turkey and helped alleviate some of their concerns. Providing additional detail about my research goals and supervisors helped build rapport and trust with potential respondents, particularly immigrant spouses.

The realities of my position as well as the need to help respondents feel comfortable meant I needed to be flexible in my methods of data collection. My decision to have respondents choose where and how the interview was to be conducted helped validate my position as a student and researcher in their eyes. This decision was also made with an eye toward shifting the perceptions and privileges of my position. As several scholars have noted, there is a strong connection between respondents’ perceptions of the researcher vis-à-vis themselves and their refusal to participate in research regarding “sensitive” issues (Adler & Adler, 2002; Herzog, 2012). Adler and Adler (2002), in particular, noted the greater the distance between the perceived power, prestige and socioeconomic class of the researcher compared to the (potential) respondent, the more likely it was the individual would refuse to participate in the study. It was therefore necessary to take these additional steps to facilitate building trust and compensate—at least somewhat—for potential difficulties caused by respondents’ perceptions of distance between my position as a “foreign researcher” in Turkey and respondents’ understandings of their own positions.

Interviews conducted with attorneys and consultants were different in terms of location and tone than those conducted with immigrant spouses. First, I almost always met with attorneys and consultants at their offices, which has an impact on how interviewees viewed me (Carter & Bolden, 2012; Herzog, 2012; Talmage, 2012). Meeting with attorneys and consultants in their office locations put me into a position similar to that experienced by immigrant spouses; at times, I was seen as lacking understanding of the naturalization process or more like a member of the

“general public” (Pfadenhauer, 2009). It was therefore necessary to position myself as a “quasi-expert” throughout the interview. Following Trinczek (1995; cited in Pfadenhauer, 2009, p. 86), demonstrating my thematic competence through the use of “qualified assessments, reasons and counter arguments every now and then in the course of the interview” helped me reposition myself in the eyes of attorney and consultant interviewees as a quasi-expert rather than a well-informed layperson, a necessary component for ensuring greater openness and willingness to discuss more subjective understandings.

While most of the attorney and consultant interviewees were happy to share their expertise on the subject, when I sought clarification on specific points—where information conflicted with that provided by the General Directorate of Population and Citizenship Affairs (Nüfus ve Vatandaşlık İşleri Genel Müdürlüğü) or other interviewees, for example—some attorney or consultant interviewees became defensive or otherwise acted as though their expertise were being called into question. Such individuals generally took a paternalistic approach, seeking to educate me on why their information or interpretation was correct and/or belittle the source of the information (Pfadenhauer, 2009). While such interactions were not contentious, they did require careful self-management throughout the interview in order to both ensure congeniality and maintain my position as a quasi-expert (Lillrank, 2012; Pfadenhauer, 2009).

3.4.4 Ethical concerns

From an ethical standpoint, maintaining participant anonymity is a crucial component of conducting research on sensitive topics or with vulnerable populations (Bazeley, 2013; Creswell, 2009; Iosifides, 2018; McInroy, 2016; Traianou, 2014). Ensuring anonymity is only a starting point, however, as my ethical commitments in this research go beyond this fundamental basis. Approval for human research was granted by the Institutional Review Board on December 12, 2018 (see Appendix D: IRB Approval). As a practical matter, the potential vulnerability of respondents—as well as the possibility they experienced humiliation or marginalization as part of their naturalization process—also meant that building trust with potential respondents was an ongoing process (Mertens & Tarsilla, 2015; Olson & Jason, 2015) that factored into all interactions with respondents.

Another component deserving of ethical scrutiny was the choice of online survey and interview language(s). I chose to present the invitation and online survey in four languages: Arabic, English, Russian, and Turkish. Further, for interviewees whose first language was not English, I was accompanied by a translator, often a research assistant or other colleague, who translated in real time to ensure successful, culturally sensitive, cross-cultural communication. My ethical obligation, in this case, was to ensure interviewees' voices were not "lost in translation." Following Bazeley (2013), I sought to involve the translators throughout the process, discussing my intended research with them to not only ensure they understood the research aims but also encouraging their suggestions and corrections to more accurately convey the intended meanings between myself and interviewees.

According to Traianou (2014), Creswell (2009), Preissle et al. (2015), Bazeley (2013), and others, awareness and sensitivity to ethical concerns is a critical component of qualitative and mixed methods research. Iosifides (2018, p. 103) further argues that qualitative researchers of migration must be extremely sensitive to "...the ways that data are collected and produced and the approaches within which findings are interpreted and presented." This is because there is often a significant power difference between the researcher and research participant(s), who are frequently disadvantaged in social hierarchies. Even in my case, an immigrant and a student researching other immigrants, some power difference remains. While academic research may not have the same reach as mass media, for example, the qualitative researcher has a particular obligation to accurately analyze and faithfully report the stories respondents share. Moreover, research on naturalization—even when citizenship isn't a politicized topic per se—can be considered sensitive in that migrants occupy a more vulnerable legal position and may be subject to deportation for a wide variety of reasons. Ethical considerations therefore had a significant role in the research design and fieldwork.

3.5 *Limitations*

Each of the research methods has particular limitations that impact the findings of this study. With regard to statistical data, for example, the limited data available imposes limits on the types of analysis that can be conducted and its potential explanatory value. The lack of data specifically on residence, marriage vs. naturalization rates, and application denial rates limit the extent to which

the question of the impact of Turkish identity on naturalization can be explored through statistical analysis. Unfortunately, TÜİK has declined requests to provide additional, more detailed data.

Similarly, the explanatory value of the online survey is limited with regard to the larger population. Many of the respondents were from Western Europe, particularly the U.K., and respondents were overwhelmingly female. Moreover, there was a notable lack of respondents from places such as Syria and Georgia. While I have previously noted that the actual population of naturalized foreign spouses is not known, the number of those naturalizing through marriage (2000-2011) and the number of foreigners who married Turks (2009-2021) provide some indication of potential naturalization numbers. The contrast between the two emphasizes that online survey respondents are not representative of known population trends in terms of origin or sex. While tens of thousands of men are potentially eligible for marriage-based naturalization, the male response rate to the survey was quite low, with only about 12% of respondents identifying themselves as men. Thus, it is evident that the online survey is not representative of the population as a whole. With that in mind, analysis of survey data and trends are only intended to apply to survey respondents; it cannot be generalized to the larger population. Related limitations exist with regard to the semi-structured interviews. Interviewees were largely recruited from survey respondents, though efforts were made to recruit additional interviewees through the same social media channels and personal networks while conducting fieldwork in the cities of Ankara, Istanbul, and Antalya. Unfortunately, only one man consented to being interviewed about his experiences, which represents a significant limitation in understanding how the gendered expectations of the marriage-based naturalization process is experienced by men.

By far, the biggest limitation to this research is the lack of interviews with bureaucratic officials. While providing a novel perspective—that of migrants and consultants—and taking an exploratory approach to my research questions, input from bureaucratic officials could have provided information regarding specific practices, standard operating procedures (and changes in these over time), and discussion regarding the different ways discretion might be applied throughout the naturalization application process. Unfortunately, however, despite repeated attempts that included emails (in Turkish), phone calls to numbers that appeared to be assigned to officials, and phone calls to the migration helpline, I was unable to make email or telephone contact

with any bureaucratic officials involved in migration decision making. Moreover, due to security concerns following the 2015 attempted coup, buildings housing bureaucratic officials were closed to the public without an appointment, and appointments were not accepted for foreigners unless the residence card was about to expire. Attempts to speak with staff while submitting renewal paperwork were not successful.

Despite these limitations, however, this study provides a novel perspective on the ways in which national understanding of the Turkish identity can impact the naturalization application process. By examining the experiences of naturalization applicants (micro) and consultants who work with a number of migrants (meso), this dissertation is a multi-level exploration of factors affecting the naturalization process itself, going beyond asking who chooses to naturalize and why and asking, instead, what barriers or challenges naturalization applicants face in a context where identification with a particular ethno-religious identity has governed naturalization since the inception of the state. This question is really only possible to ask in the case of marriage-based citizenship acquisition, as the marriage itself forms the basis to acquire citizenship. It is in examining this particular set of applicants, those who are not required to speak the language, share in the cultural history of the nation, or meet income requirements as a precondition for naturalization, that we can explore the impact of the national identity on the naturalization process experienced by applicants.¹¹

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described the processes I followed in analyzing the quantitative and qualitative data obtained from TUIK, an online survey, and semi-structured interviews with immigrants as well as consultants and attorneys who routinely assist immigrants with navigating

¹¹ While there is not an income requirement to apply for citizenship, the sponsor of a family residence permit—whether a Turkish citizen or the holder of another type of residence permit—is required by Law No 6458 (2016), “Law on Foreigners and International Protection,” to meet specific income minimums as well as the providing insurance and sufficient housing for the holder(s) of the family residence permit. A family residence permit does not, however, allow the holder access to the labor market. Thus, a foreign spouse on an educational or employment visa may opt to continue on such rather than obtain a family residence permit.

immigration-related processes. Quantitative data was subjected to analytical procedures such as calculating averages, percentages, and totals using Microsoft Excel (2023). Qualitative data was analyzed using NVivo (2022) in an iterative process that began with themes gleaned from the literature and continued with themes extracted from the interviews. In the next chapter, I will examine the historical roots and modern expressions of the ethno-religious Turkish identity. I argue that because this understanding of the Turkish identity is deeply rooted in Turkish history and culture, it cannot help but influence the gatekeepers of citizenship—bureaucratic officials responsible for the naturalization process—impacting the ways in which they respond to naturalization applications.

CHAPTER 4. A BRIEF EXPLORATION OF THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF CITIZENSHIP AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN TURKEY

4.1 *Introduction*

Understanding the contemporary context of citizenship in Turkey, particularly with regard to how regulations are interpreted and/or applied, is assisted by an exploration of the historical context of citizenship within the state. While a significant amount of research has been conducted with respect to the Western world, generally the settler context of the U.S.A., Australia and Canada, and the European sphere, particularly Western Europe, far less scholarly attention has been paid to citizenship regimes at the European periphery and beyond. Moreover, specific socio-political factors related to the Turkish context—as a secular Muslim state at the European periphery—indicate the importance of reviewing how the concept of citizenship has been shaped and reshaped by domestic and international factors. As Adar (Adar, 2019) notes, “Turkey is the only country in the Middle East which applies a non-religious and unified law to matters related to the family,” while at the same time “religious difference [remain] central to the definition of who is included in, and excluded from, the nation.” Thus, the context in which “Turkish citizenship” was formulated and developed is different than other Muslim-majority states as well as from the European states it borders.

In exploring this concept of citizenship in the Turkish context, this chapter highlights the impact of both domestic and transnational factors, from the roots of Turkish citizenship understandings in the late Ottoman period through the contemporary period. The goal of combining domestic and transnational factors is to bring greater clarity in later chapters that specifically discuss marriage-based naturalization. The history of citizenship in Turkey, with all its complexity, demonstrates a concern with territorial boundaries (as the 1869 Ottoman Nationality Law sought to ensure) as well as cultural boundaries (including “Turkishness” as a varying mix of Islam, ethnicity and other characteristics as demonstrated most clearly from the founding of the Republic of Turkey through the interwar years).

4.2 *The late Ottoman period: The origin of the Turkish identity*

In order to fully discuss the understanding of citizenship in the Republic of Turkey, it is important to first indicate the preceding conditions that had a significant impact on state formation and this understanding. Contestation over the rights, role and definition of a citizen date back at least to the late Ottoman period. According to Hanioglu (2008), the last century and a half of the Ottoman Empire cannot be understood in isolation from the larger European context and struggle for power. The impact of the French Revolution and Napoleon's invasion of Egypt highlighted the declining international power of the Ottoman sultan (Ahmad, 1993). This was followed in short order by ethnic uprisings inspired by French nationalism (Ahmad, 1993). As the Ottoman Empire became more entangled with the European political and economic systems, it also began to look more toward the West for models of modernization (Hanioglu, 2008). As such, it is clear that some of the earliest transnational actors and ideas affecting the trajectory of the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey came not with 20th century globalization but with 19th century imperialism, colonialism and state rivalries.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, nationalism first became important in the Ottoman Empire as a political principle; the Ottoman understanding of nationalism was heavily influenced by European principles and experiences of both nationalism and patriotism (Breuilly, 1996; Dawn, 1961). The adoption of nationalism as a political principle formed part of the push toward modernization, primarily along the French model, as well as a bid to gain wider European support as demonstrated by the structural reforms under Mahmud II and during the *Tanzimat* period (Dawn, 1961; Hanioglu, 2008). While early experience with nationalism consisted of attempts to suppress movements toward autonomy by Serbs, Greeks, Egyptians and others—often supported by the West and legitimized by nationalist rhetoric (Breuilly, 1996; Hanioglu, 2008)—the Ottoman Empire eventually adopted the principle of nationalism on its own terms. The most important actor bringing nationalism to the forefront of the Ottoman imagination was Egyptian author Rifa ah Rafi, whose 1834 book (republished in Turkish in 1840) focused on the territoriality of the nation (Dawn, 1961).

Inspired by Rafi and others, *Tanzimat* reformers created a new understanding of citizenship through the Reformation Edict of 1856, the Ottoman Nationality Law of 1869 (though focused on

the acquisition of nationality not citizenship per se (Hanley, 2016)), and the 1876 Ottoman Constitution. In contrast with the prior *millet* system, in which religion was the main system of identification (Gülalp, 2006), this understanding was less focused on religious or ethnic affiliation and recognized all residents as nationals of the Empire (Kadirbeyoğlu, 2010) while retaining Islam as the official state religion—allowing the free exercise of religion provided non-interference with “public order and morality” —and the sultan as the “protector of the Muslim faith” (Hanioglu, 2008, p. 117; Ottoman Const. art. 11, art. 4). Citizenship itself is defined by the Constitution thusly: “All subjects of the empire are called Ottomans, without distinction whatever faith they profess; the status of an Ottoman is acquired and lost according to conditions specified by law” (Ottoman Const. art. 8). According to Yeğen (2004), it is important to note this wording in contrast to that used in later years during the early republican era of Turkey.

Inspired by Montesquieu, Rousseau and others, this Ottoman citizenship, among other Western-oriented reforms, was hotly contested by the conservative Muslim population and Young Ottomans as “a capitulation to European dictates” (Hanioglu, 2008, p. 103). The supranational ideology of Ottomanism, an overarching Ottoman identity, clashed not only with local practices and conservative or traditionalist elements in society but also conflicted with religious and other nationalist identities, leading members of various alienated groups to view Ottomanism as merely “Turkification” under another name (Hanioglu, 2008). I argue, however, that the idea of Ottomanism as Turkification indicates that a reasonably well-developed idea of what constitutes “Turkishness” was already present by the late Ottoman Era.

With regard to spousal citizenship, the Ottoman Empire followed the larger trends of family citizenship and derivative domicile wherein children take their legal membership status from their father and married women take their citizenship status from their husbands, thus a woman who married a non-Ottoman citizen would normally be expected to lose her Ottoman citizenship and gain the citizenship of her husband. The 1869 Ottoman Nationality Law, however, specifically exempted Ottoman women who had married Iranian men and the children of such marriages from this citizenship loss/gain, indicating that they remained Ottoman subjects (Hanley, 2016). Following the death of the foreign-born spouse or divorce, the woman was permitted to regain her original Ottoman citizenship if she had lost it through marriage and children born to

foreign parents could apply for citizenship upon reaching their majority (Hanley, 2016). Male foreign spouses were treated differently; as of 1873, the foreign husbands and children of Ottoman women were not allowed to inherit from them (Hanley, 2016). While foreigners were generally permitted to naturalize following a period of residence, male spouses did not automatically obtain access to citizenship in the way that women did, and women who had lost their citizenship through marriage to a foreign spouse (and had not divorced or become widowed) had to reapply for their citizenship with their foreign husbands.

Spurred on by internal factors such as corruption, instability and lack of opportunity for political participation, international factors including the Great Game between Great Britain and Russia, and transnational influences including exiled reformists, the 1908 Young Turk Revolution was instrumental not only in re-establishing a constitutional monarchy within the Ottoman Empire, in abeyance since 1878, but also set the stage for further modernization and Turkish nationalism (Ahmad, 1968, 1993). However the ideals of Ottomanism, specifically those of a pan-Ottoman identity and citizenship, did not survive the frequent internal and external conflicts plaguing the Ottoman Empire leading up to WWI, though the Empire did become far more homogeneous as a result of its territorial losses (Ahmad, 1993). The pan-Ottoman identity, state membership irrespective of ethnicity and religion, can be partly contrasted with the Turkish identity laid out during the early years of the Republic of Turkey (Yeğen, 2004), the foundation of which was facilitated by the outbreak of yet another war.

The start of WWI allowed the Ottoman Empire to reject privileges previously allocated to foreign residents at the insistence of the European powers and strike out on a path toward independence and a Turkish state (Ahmad, 1993). Notably, it was during this time that the state wrested control over marriage from religious authorities via the 1917 Decree on Family Law (Ahmad, 1993), setting the stage for later control over marriage-related immigration. At the same time, the push for Western-oriented modernization continued to be felt and the idea of Turkish nationalism, present since the late Ottoman stage, emerged as a strong ideology (Ahmad, 1968; Hanioglu, 2008). The legacies of the Ottoman Empire, including the ideal of a strong, centralized state identified with the nation, had a significant impact on the formation of the Republic of Turkey (Ahmad, 1993; İçduygu, 2004).

4.3 The early modern Republic of Turkey and interwar period: Creating ethnic, cultural, and territorial definitions of “Turkishness”

Following its own nationalist uprising and eventual nation-state formation, citizenship within the newly formed Republic of Turkey remained a contested issue informed by transnational events and influences. Ongoing conflict had had a significant impact on the demographics of what became Turkey; there was a 20% population decline within the borders of the new state by 1923, which aggravated labor shortages (Ahmad, 1993). Moreover, the Great War left the Ottoman Empire partitioned by European powers who became far more interested in preventing each other from gaining additional territory than in continuing to fight Turkish nationalists (Ahmad, 1993; Hanioglu, 2008). Nationalist rebels found value in utilizing Islamic discourse in mobilizing the mixed population, strategies included using words derived from *millet* (e.g., milliyetçi, milliyetçilik, milli) (which had come to mean a religious community in the Turkish usage) to describe nation, national, and nationalism and in claiming the sultan-caliph was a prisoner of Christian forces in order to unite disparate Islamic ethnic groups (Ahmad, 1993). Despite later distancing from and conflict with conservative religious groups, this strategic decision may have contributed to the conceptions of citizen and national identity eventually put into place as part of the nation-building process based on being part of the majority ethnic group (Turk) and religion (Sunni Muslim), or membership in a group thought to be easily assimilated to this identity (e.g., migrant Bosnians, Circassians, Pomaks, and Tatars from the Balkans (Coban, 2012)). During the first years of the Republic, 836,826 migrants from the Balkans settled in Turkey, a clear indication of their welcome (Pusch, 2012). Even before specific legislation defining a citizen had been promulgated, Turkey was among those states seeking ethnic homogeneity. The emergence of new boundaries following the end of WWI divided ethnic groups among new nation-states, creating minority and majority populations within the nation-state and led to the use of various tools by the nascent states to solidify ethnic boundaries. As part of this process, Turkey utilized migration as a tool both before and after legally defining Turkish citizens and Turks, including the emigration of non-Muslims and immigration of Turkish Muslim populations through reciprocal agreements with other states (including the 1923-1926 Turkish-Greek population exchanges), forced displacements (including the forced deportation of Armenians during WWI) and various policies that triggered

emigration, including the reservation of numerous professions to ethnic Turks (Aktar, 2009; Çağaptay, 2003; de Bel-Air, 2016; Gülalp, 2006; Hanioglu, 2008; İçduygu & Aksel, 2013, 2015).

As part of the nation-building process, Mustafa Kemal and his supporters emphasized the importance of a modernized, secular Turkey through Turkish nationalism (Ahmad, 1993), necessitating a solidified Turkish identity. Reference to Islam as the state religion were thus removed from the Turkish Constitution in 1928 (Ahmad, 1993). Citizenship and citizenship education were considered critical to the success of the nation-building process (İçduygu et al., 1999). Laws and institutions, including the Ministry of Population Exchange, Development and Settlement (1923), the Constitution (1924), and the Turkish Citizenship Law (Law 1312, 1928) sought to create this identity. Article 88 of the 1924 Constitution of the Republic of Turkey thus defined a Turk and Turkish citizen as “The name Turk, as a political term, shall be understood to include all citizens of the Turkish Republic, without distinction of, or reference to, race or religion” (Earle, 1925) and granted citizenship to all residents (Kadirbeyoğlu, 2010). At the same time, however, the word “Turk” was often used in reference to a specific group of people—ethnic Turks—not necessarily for Turkish citizens overall (Çağaptay, 2003; Yeğen, 2004). This demonstrates the importance of an ethnic understanding of citizenship from the beginning. Moreover, part and parcel of this ethnic identity was identification with Islam; between 1914 and 1927, the percentage of non-Muslims in the state dropped from 19.1% to 2.5% (Coban, 2012). The first citizenship law, passed in 1928, continued to use *jus sanguinis*, complemented by a territorial understanding of citizenship, as well as outlining the conditions for naturalization and denaturalization (Çağaptay, 2003; Kadirbeyoğlu, 2010).

As Secor (2004) notes, the Turkish understanding of citizenship has always been paradoxical, based on a nearly incompatible mix of ethnic and civic conceptions of national identity, combining territorial, ethnic and religious understandings of citizenship. This may be observed in a variety of instances. As Yeğen (2004) and Çağaptay (2003) discuss, “Turk” may be used to refer to either a person of a specific ethnic group or to a citizen of Turkey depending on the context. Yeğen (2004) argues that the parliamentary discussion regarding the wording of the 1924 Constitution article on citizenship—specifically the use of “*Turk as a political term*”—is evidence that “Turk” carries with it a defined ethnic meaning, buttressing his case with a discussion

of various government announcements for “Turks” versus those for “Turkish citizens.” Çağaptay (2003) follows this with an overview of parliamentary discussions defining a “Turk” as an ethnic group (e.g., those exempting Turkish companies from customs duties) as well as a discussion of various policies that benefitted ethnic Turks over Turkish citizens, including the 1924 exemption from customs duties for imported boats, the 1926 Law on Government Employees, Law 1214 (1928) limiting the professions of doctors, dentists, midwives and nurses to ethnic Turks and the 1936 Law on Associations prohibiting the establishment of organizations and associations representing ethnic and religious minorities, among others. At the same time, the “Turkish History Thesis” and “Sun Language Theory” rose to prominence (Çağaptay, 2003); present in school texts beginning from the 1930s and lasting through the 1980s, these further utilized and solidified a specific ethno-nationalist view of Turks as a historic race, native to Central Asia, and responsible for bringing civilization and advanced culture to various regions (Copeaux, 2016).

During the interwar period, Atatürk and the Kemalists looked to fascist Italy and Nazi Germany as models for state development and policy (Ahmad, 1993). Non-Muslims, while given minority status following the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, were frequently perceived as a threat to the Turkish and Muslim identity of the nation-state (de Bel-Air, 2016). This is significant in that one of the first milestones of Turkish citizenship policy was the 1934 Law on Settlement, which facilitated the (im)migration and integration of people of “Turkish origin and culture” while obstructing the entry of those who did not meet this criteria (İçduygu & Aksel, 2015). As Çağaptay (2003) notes, naturalization and denaturalization were likewise linked to the criteria of Turkishness, with those seen as able to assimilate—and having at least nominally converted to Islam and/or taken Turkish names—were able to access citizenship while others were deported. Marriage to a Turkish-Muslim woman could also increase the possibility of gaining citizenship through Article 5 of Law 1312 (1928) on Turkish citizenship. Race, as linked to language and culture, became a significant element of Turkishness during the 1930s as did the idea of an exclusive nationalism, which was incorporated into the constitution in 1937 (Ahmad, 1993; Gülalp, 2006). Migrant settlement involved elements of territoriality in that concentric zones of “Turkishness” were designated and groups were assigned settlement based on perceptions of whether they could be assimilated into Turkish society (Gülalp, 2006; İçduygu & Aksel, 2015; Yeğen, 2004). While İçduygu et al. (1999) and Çağaptay (2003) argue that access to citizenship

was not based on ethnic background, the exclusion of specific groups from settlement, access to naturalization and the ethnic / religious characteristics of denaturalized citizens indicate there was at least a *de facto*, if not always a full *de jure*, reliance on ethnicity and religion in the understanding of citizenship and Turkishness. Minorities, including Armenians and Greek Orthodox, who had left Turkey during the struggle for independence were excluded from citizenship in 1927 (Kadirbeyoğlu, 2010). Laws governing the return of Anatolian Christians to Turkey denied return to most Armenians and Greek Orthodox expatriates while various other deterrence policies made it difficult, if not impossible, for non-Turkish citizens to be employed within Turkey, thereby “encouraging” the emigration of other groups, particularly Jews, from Turkey (Çağaptay, 2003; Kadirbeyoğlu, 2010). Kadirbeyoğlu (2010) and Çağaptay (2003) further indicate that while a significant number of Greeks were forced to leave due to these laws, specific groups (e.g., Belarusians and White Russians) were granted citizenship to avoid this fate; this speaks to the desirability of certain groups over others based on a combination of ethnicity and religion.

4.4 The Second World War through the early 1980s: Solidifying and reifying Turkishness by encouraging emigration/immigration

While Turkey did not enter World War II until early 1945—on the side of the Allies (Wagman, 2018)—Nazi Germany and its racial policies may have still had influence. In 1942, for example, Turkey again employed specifically targeted legislation with the 1942 Capital Tax Law which imposed taxes on those who had gained wealth during World War II with different rates for Muslims and non-Muslims; public opinion at the time was that it was geared toward destroying the commercial supremacy of minorities (Ahmad, 1993). While this did not affect immigration policy directly, it did have the effect of encouraging minority, particularly Jewish, emigration from Turkey. Moreover, Adar (Adar, 2019) argues that the link between ethnicity and religion intensified between the period following WWII and the military coup in 1960. Combined with the disparate treatment of minorities enacted and strengthened by legislative instruments, such emphasis on religion and ethnicity was in keeping with policies and identity created around the formation of the Turkish Republic.

Beginning in the 1950s, migration in Turkey predominantly consisted of rural-urban migration and “temporary” labor migration to Europe based on bilateral labor agreements:

Germany in 1961, Austria, the Netherlands and Belgium in 1964, France in 1965 and Sweden in 1967 (Kadirbeyoglu, 2009; Korfalı et al., 2014; Tiryakioğlu, 2006). Citizenship policies during this time were therefore predominantly focused on Turkish guest workers abroad, their families and returnees (Pusch & Splitt, 2013). During this period, citizenship acquisition was governed by the 1964 Turkish Citizenship Act, which continued to favor the principle of *jus sanguinis* generally based on the father's citizenship (excepting in cases where the father's citizenship could not be passed down or the child was illegitimate) (Tiryakioğlu, 2006). The 1964 Turkish Citizenship Act further set out conditions for acquiring citizenship through naturalization, specifying that a foreign woman who married a citizen of Turkey could obtain citizenship upon making a declaration of intent, though all others must meet conditions that included length of residency, intent to remain in Turkey and being of "good morals" (Law No. 403 Türk Vatandaşlığı Kanunu [Turkish Citizenship Law], 1964). This Act also provided for the Turkish citizenship of a child born out of wedlock to a foreign mother, provided the progeny was recognized by the Turkish father (Law No. 403 Türk Vatandaşlığı Kanunu [Turkish Citizenship Law], 1964). International marriage migration during this time period, however, was predominantly *emigration* from Turkey via family reunification policies abroad, which is reflected in the laws governing citizenship. First, in that a woman marrying a foreigner would lose her Turkish citizenship, reifying the idea that (only) women assimilate to their partners' culture; second, in that a child born of a Turkish father or a Turkish mother (whether within Turkey or abroad), would be a Turkish citizen from birth; and third, in the allowance for some of those who had lost their Turkish citizenship abroad, their spouses and their children, to regain Turkish citizenship provided they re-settled in Turkey (Korfalı et al., 2014; Law No. 403 Türk Vatandaşlığı Kanunu [Turkish Citizenship Law], 1964).

4.5 *The 1980s through 2003: International upheavals, international marriage, and domestic backlash*

Beginning in roughly the last quarter of the 20th century, Turkey became an important country of immigration. The political, economic and social transformations of neighboring states—including the breakup of the U.S.S.R. and upheavals in successor states, multiple debt crises in developing states, rapid population growth and the rapid spread of technology—all contributed to rising numbers of immigrants in Turkey (Bloch, 2011, 2017; Pusch, 2012; Toksöz & Ulutaş, 2012). Such

immigrants included forced migrants, labor migrants, suitcase traders and transit migrants from throughout the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, the Balkans, the Middle East, Asia, Africa and the Western world (İçduygu & Karaçay, 2012; Pusch, 2012; Sağıroğlu, 2015). It is important to note, however, that many of these migrants were not allowed access to citizenship. As Kirişçi and Kirişçi (2000) argue, “examining a state’s immigration and refugee legislation and policies can be a revealing way of testing whether a state lives up to its formal definition of citizenship.” In practice, Turkish immigration and refugee policies have been biased in favour of people of ‘Turkish descent and culture’ and then only as long as such persons were of a Sunni-Hanefi background” (Kirişçi & Kirişçi, 2000). Thus, while Turkey was undergoing a migration transition, and the state continuously espoused a secular ideology, the definition of Turkish identity remained linked with an ethnic and Muslim identity (Copeaux, 2002). At the same time, however, the regular and irregular so-called “new immigration” —a term coined by Kirişçi (2006) to indicate the newer waves of non-Muslim immigrants or those not of Turkish descent—also came a rise in marriages within Turkey between Turkish citizens and (potentially non-Muslim) foreigners, forcing a redefinition (or at least a questioning) of cultural and civic identities in Turkey (İçduygu & Aksel, 2015; Kirişçi & Kirişçi, 2000; Tolay, 2015).

Beginning in the 1980s and dramatically increasing during the 1990s, marriages between women from Eastern Europe, particularly Russia, and the former Soviet sphere became far more common (Akyüz, 2017; Bloch, 2011, 2017; İçduygu, 2013; E.M. Özgür et al., 2014). As Bloch (2017, p. 4) notes, “...global economic crises and related neoliberal restructuring are integrally tied to what is often relegated to ‘emotional,’ ‘private,’ or ‘intimate’ realms.” Thus, the transnational factors associated with the collapse of the Soviet Union, as well as other upheavals and transformations within and beyond the region, had a direct impact on what would become marriage migration to Turkey. Domestically, the 1980 coup and subsequent military tutelage helped stabilize and revitalize the Turkish economy over the next several years (despite civil unrest and the 1982 international debt crisis) (Naylor, 2004). The 1981 Amendments to Law 403 on Turkish Citizenship continued to focus primarily on Turkish citizens abroad; specifying that a child born to Turkish citizen mother *and* a Turkish citizen father would be a citizen from birth, and adding a provision for the loss of citizenship for any individual who intentionally gains citizenship of a foreign state without permission and for any individual who gains foreign

citizenship and does not return to Turkey within seven years to demonstrate continuing interest and ties to the state (Law No. 403 Türk Vatandaşlığı Kanunu [Turkish Citizenship Law, as Amended], 1981). With regard to the question of Turkish identity, the preamble to the 1982 Constitution reaffirmed the principles of nationalism, defined to include the “material and spiritual well-being of the Republic,” lack of protection for “thoughts or opinions contrary to... Turkish historical and moral values” while simultaneously reiterating a commitment to secularism (Preamble, Constitution of the Republic of Turkey, 1982).

Within the next decade, open borders, the offering of tourist visas at entry as of the early 1990s and prosperous Turkish economy encouraged a large number of would-be migrants from the post-Soviet sphere (Akyüz, 2017; Bloch, 2011, 2017). Notably, in an indeterminate number of cases, marriages were made with the instrumental intent of gaining Turkish citizenship, to gain or retain access to the labor market—to circumvent new restrictions meant to control the informal economy—or to remain in Turkey; this was done both between co-ethnics (from Georgia, Moldova, Azerbaijan and elsewhere) as well as between those of different ethnic backgrounds (Akyüz, 2017; Bloch, 2011, 2017; Deniz & Özgür, 2020; E.M. Özgür et al., 2014; Ertuğrul Murat Özgür & Deniz, 2014). This was only possible because, at that time, Turkish citizenship could be conferred virtually automatically upon declaration of “intent” by the foreign spouse (Law No. 403 Türk Vatandaşlığı Kanunu [Turkish Citizenship Law, as Amended], 1981; Law No. 403 Türk Vatandaşlığı Kanunu [Turkish Citizenship Law], 1964).¹² A number of authors have noted that the high number of migrants (and marriages), specifically women from the former Soviet sphere, led to a public backlash as well as the politicization and securitization of international marriage, including rising “discourses on how post-Soviet women were destroying Turkish families” and widespread public belief that “Russian” women were, by and large, hypersexual by nature, engaged in fake marriages and/or prostitution, and had a variety of sexually transmitted infections (Bellér- Hann, 1995; Bloch, 2017, p. 127; Hacaoğlu, 2002).¹³

¹² As I discuss in my research findings, this was not the case with everyone but seemed to be the general practice.

¹³ Women from throughout the former U.S.S.R. are often stigmatized as being “Russian,” synonymous with being a prostitute. In Turkey, the common Russian name “Natasha” also became synonymous with “prostitute” in the early 1990s; Beller-Hann (1995) argues the connection is due to a song that was popular at the time.

4.6 *The 2000s: E.U. accession, minority rights, and immigration (unsuccessfully) challenge the ethno-religious Turkish identity*

During the latter half of the 20th century, Turkey continued to look toward Europe and the West both for political support and for modernization strategies to emulate; its formal status as an E.U. candidate country as of 1999 simply marked the latest in a series of moves seeking greater integration with Europe (Bürgin, 2016; Featherstone, 2003). The initial politicization of immigration, particularly marriage immigration, combined with potential E.U. accession and acquis requirements that necessitated citizenship policy convergence along semi-securitized lines, led to the 2003 promulgation of Law No. 4866, amending the Turkish Citizenship Law with regard to naturalization through marriage for the first time since the Turkish Citizenship Law had been enacted in 1964. According to these amendments, citizenship through marriage to a Turkish citizen would no longer occur based on the “intent” of the foreign bride. A waiting period of three years was introduced before a foreigner married to a Turkish citizen could apply for citizenship, provided the foreigner had been residing with the Turkish spouse (Law No. 4866 Türk Vatandaşlığı Kanununda Değişiklik Yapılmasına İlişkin Kanun [Law Amending the Turkish Citizenship Law], 2003).¹⁴ Interestingly, for the first time, *male* foreign spouses were permitted to apply for citizenship through marriage, as the law specified only “foreign spouse,” not (foreign) female partner (Law No. 4866 Türk Vatandaşlığı Kanununda Değişiklik Yapılmasına İlişkin Kanun [Law Amending the Turkish Citizenship Law], 2003). Law No. 4866 (2003) was implemented via Regulation 2004/7275, which set forth the documents required to apply for naturalization through marriage. The significance of the changes wrought by Law No. 4866 (2003) are such that it provides the first natural division in survey and interview respondents: those who naturalized before 2003 and those who naturalized after; see Chapter 5, section **Error! Reference source not found.** as well as discussions of the impacts of changes to the legal framework in Chapters 6-8.

As part of ongoing accession negotiations and convergence between domestic policy and E.U. policies, the 2003 changes in naturalization through marriage were further solidified in 2009, with Turkish Citizenship Law No. 5901 and the attendant regulation for implementation (Regulation 2010/139). Article 16 of Law No. 5901 sets out the basic requirements for the acquisition of Turkish citizenship through marriage. These requirements are that the applicant must

be married to a Turkish citizen for at least three years (and be married at the time of the application), applicant and spouse must be “living in family unity,” not engaging in acts that are incompatible with such unity, and must not pose a threat to national security or public order (Law No. 5901 Türk Vatandaşlığı Kanunu [Turkish Citizenship Law], 2009). The implementation regulation sets out a list of required documents and procedures that must be followed as well as the investigative steps that will be taken (Regulation 2010/139 on the Implementation of Turkish Citizenship Law, 2010). Combined with its implementing regulation, Law No. 5901 (2009) provides another natural division of interviewees: those who naturalized after 2003 but before 2010, allowing basic comparisons across time periods. These laws—Law No. 4866 (2003), Regulation 2004/7275, Law No. 5901 (2009), and Regulation 2010/139—and their associated requirements, are examined vis-à-vis survey responses and interviewee experiences in Chapters 6-8. It is interesting to note that while Law No. 5901 (2009) made marriage-based naturalization more difficult, it conversely made ethnic/historical connection-based naturalization easier. That is to say, by removing certain military related clauses in the Turkish Citizenship Law, Law No. 5901 (2009) removed potential barriers to citizenship mostly affecting Turkish citizens living abroad and/or their descendants (Kadirbeyoğlu, 2010), highlighting the continued importance of Turkish ethnicity in citizenship policy.

Alongside changes to citizenship law, Turkey was undergoing what seemed to be a seismic shift away from assimilationism and toward multiculturalism and reconciliation with minority populations, with increased discourse around diversity and the elimination of discriminatory restrictions and/or bans targeting minority groups (Aktürk, 2012; Kakışım, 2018; A. Kaya, 2013b). Despite this apparent move toward multiculturalism, however, Çirakman (2011) notes that the ethnonationalist discourse of the 2000s painted ethnic and minority communities in Turkey as “enemies-within.” Additionally, N. Kaya (2015, pp. 10, 11) argues that the Turkish education system continues to discriminate against students based on “colour, ethnic origin, language, religion, and belief,” while school curricula and textbooks depict minority communities as

¹⁴ This three-year period of residence with the Turkish spouse does not necessarily have to occur in Turkey, marking a significant difference between the Turkish citizenship regime and many European citizenship regimes. This difference is largely due to Turkey’s position regarding Turkish emigrants and interest in maintaining citizenship ties.

“enemies of the country.” This has a tangible effect. Kaya (2013a) cites research showing that more than 40% of Turks would not tolerate Greeks or Armenians as neighbors and 28% of Turks would not want a neighbor of Kurdish origin. Further, according to an article in the *Hurriyet Daily News* (2017), significant percentages of young people view atheists, non-Muslims, and minorities as “others” that may pose a threat to Turkey and the Turkish lifestyle. Data from the World Values Survey further supports the idea that attitudes toward minority communities in Turkey are slow to change. According to Wave 7 of the World Values Survey (WVS), 41.2% of Turks would not like to have a person of a different race as a neighbor (2022). While down from 52% in the 1994-1998 data series, this apparent dislike or distrust for those of a different race has consistently been mentioned by more than one-third of Turkish WVS respondents (Inglehart et al., 2022). Similarly, at least one-third of Turkish WVS respondents have consistently indicated they would not like to have an immigrant / foreign worker or someone of a different religion as a neighbor (Inglehart et al., 2022). Notably, the percentage of Turkish WVS respondents who have said they would not like these types of people as neighbors has increased over the last few WVS data gathering rounds, highlighting a growing dislike or distrust of these populations.

As accession talks stalled in the mid-2000s, Turkey lost trust in the accession process; Europeanization continued in the realms of domestic policy but at a diminished rate and questionable effectiveness, particularly when it came to administrative reforms (Bürgin, 2016; Çelenk, 2009; Polat, 2013; Soyaltin, 2017). At the same time Europeanization was diminishing, there was a rising tide of (ethno) nationalist rhetoric and Islam was becoming a more potent political force, both have been instrumentalized by the ruling Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP), particularly after 2011 when Turkey began to receive large numbers of people fleeing conflict in neighboring Syria, and immigration became more politicized (Apaydın & Müftüler-Baç, 2022; Çirakman, 2011; A. Kaya, 2015; Ozsoy, 2022; Öztürk, 2019; Tremblay, 2017; Uras, 2022).¹⁵

¹⁵ As Turkey retains the geographic limitation to the 1951 Refugee Convention, limiting refugee status to those of European origin, Syrian immigrants were termed “guests.” Registered Syrian “guests” were eventually given “temporary protection status;” a quasi-legal status that includes residence and work permits but also restricts where the holder may live, work, and/or travel.

The rise of the AKP has had significant impacts on the political landscape of Turkey. In power since taking over the reins of the national government in 2002, the right-wing AKP has become increasingly Islamist, populist, and authoritarian over the past two decades (Akyol, 2019; Baker, 2018; A. Kaya, 2015; Öztürk, 2016; Yilmaz, 2017). During this time, there has also been a rise in intertwined (ethno) nationalist and Islamic rhetoric, instrumentalized by the AKP (Çirakman, 2011; Hoffman et al., 2018; Yabanci, 2022). According to Acar and Altunok (2013), even when not explicitly religious, AKP rhetoric demonstrates moral judgement and stigmatization of certain practices, blurring the distinction between public and private practices and putting the state in charge of establishing and overseeing the moral-religious direction of society. Discursively and ideologically, the AKP has focused on the family as the locus of social order (Acar & Altunok, 2013); as such, policies ostensibly meant to strengthen the (“traditional”) family have accompanied political and economic liberalization while promoting and even legislating conservative social and cultural values and practices. In practice, this has meant the use of religious-nationalist symbols and language to appeal to the public as well as increasing politicization and/or retraction of support for policies and causes viewed as contrary to the Islamic principles and morals espoused by the ruling party, which include a strong emphasis on family and “traditional” (patriarchal, cisgender, and heterosexual) gender roles (Acar & Altunok, 2013; Akyol, 2019; Yabanci, 2022). This religious-political populist stance is reflected in Turkey’s recent withdrawal from the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), the banning of LGBTQI+ Pride marches since 2015 on the grounds of immorality, the institution and support of “politicized leisure” activities among youth, changes in education policy, and so on (Acar & Altunok, 2013; Akyol, 2019; Bilginsoy & Badendieck, 2022; Öztürk, 2016; Tuysuz & Sariyuce, 2021; Yabanci, 2022). As part of its Islamic populist and ethnonationalist rhetoric, the AKP has further engaged in “politics of exclusion,” and now “...focuses more on ‘who [does] not belong to the people’ through ethnoreligious criteria,” highlighting the ongoing securitization of minority and immigrant populations (Yabanci, 2022). This has had the effect of increasing political and social cleavages in Turkish society along ethnic and religious lines, particularly following the 2016 attempted coup, which escalated exclusionary AKP rhetoric (Baker, 2018; Hoffman et al., 2018; Yabanci, 2022).

One cannot examine the current Turkish context, particularly with regard to citizenship, without at least mentioning the Syrian population in Turkey. Following the outbreak of a multi-sided civil war in 2011, Syrians began to flood over the Turkish border. As of 2022, Turkey was host to approximately 3.7 million Syrian refugees, out of a total population of 5.5 million foreigners (Uras, 2022). As diverse in immigration intentions as any other group, some Syrians only passed through Turkey briefly on their way to European destinations. Others remained in Turkey a while longer, though still intending to move on. Still others see their move to Turkey as permanent. Life in Turkey for many Syrians can be precarious, however. As Turkey retains the geographic limitation to the 1951 Refugee Convention, limiting refugee status to those of European origin, Syrian immigrants were initially termed “guests.” Registered Syrian “guests” were eventually given “temporary protection status,” a quasi-legal status that restricts where the holder may live, work, and/or travel; travel documents must be provided to taxi and bus drivers in order to travel between cities or provinces (D’Ignoti, 2023; Human Rights Watch, 2022; Uras, 2022).¹⁶ Moreover, as Uras (2022) and Mourenza (2023) note, parallel with increasing anti-refugee sentiment in Turkey, administrative processes have become slower and more difficult to navigate for foreigners, Syrians in particular. As of February 2022, for example, applications for temporary and international protection are no longer accepted in 16 (of 81) provinces, including Istanbul, Ankara, and provinces along the Syrian border (Human Rights Watch, 2022). Foreigners seeking a residence permit are also restricted to a limit of 20% per neighborhood for non-nationals, resulting in 1,200 neighborhoods being off-limits to additional foreign residents (Human Rights Watch, 2022; Uras, 2022). Unfortunately, even Syrians with temporary protection status and employment face abusive employment practices, increasing violence from neighbors and security forces, and forced deportation to northern Syria (Human Rights Watch, 2022; Uras, 2022). Finally, as holders of temporary protection status, Syrians are limited in their ability to apply for citizenship, eligible only to apply via the marriage, investment, or “exceptional” pathways (D’Ignoti, 2023; Levkowitz, 2023).

¹⁶ Temporary protection status grants the successful applicant a *kimlik* document that serves as a residence permit and identification card. The temporary protection status also allows holders to apply for a work permit, receive healthcare, and access education.

While a full examination of Syrian citizenship in Turkey, including citizenship aspirations and strategies, is beyond the scope of this research, it is worth highlighting certain key points of interest. While statistical data indicate a large number of Syrian women have entered into marriage with Turkish men, this data understates the number of Syrian women “married” to Turkish men. This is because Turkey only grants legal recognition to civil marriages between one man and one woman. While religious marriage ceremonies (*nikâh*) are permitted—a growing number of which are polygynous—such a ceremony confers no legal rights or benefits.¹⁷ A significant number of Syrian women and girls, however, have only entered into such religious marriages—often as a second or third wife—and therefore lack access to citizenship and other legal benefits such as healthcare, divorce, child support, and inheritance rights (Bülbül, 2016; Holland, 2016; Nawa & Sebzeci, 2016a, 2016b; Oppenheim, 2020). Legally, any children are treated as the offspring of an unwed (foreign) mother. If the Turkish father claims paternity, they can become Turkish citizens. The Syrian mother may then lose custody of the children, and she will have no legal recourse. If he does not, and given the difficulty of registering the birth of a Syrian child with the Syrian state, they may join the ranks of tens, even hundreds, of thousands of children facing statelessness (Davison, 2016; Nawa & Sebzeci, 2016b). While asylum-seekers from Syria are eligible to apply for temporary protection status for themselves and their children, doing so requires they present themselves to appropriate authorities with a reasonable period of time, which, as previously noted, may not be possible in many areas of Turkey (Human Rights Watch, 2022; UNHCR, n.d.; Uras, 2022).

Overall, the politicization and securitization of (marriage) immigration and growth in ethnonationalist rhetoric should not be a surprise. Neoliberal E.U. accession requirements, advancement of minority rights, and increased immigration have represented ongoing challenges to the ethno-religious Turkish national identity. This presents an opportunity for political actors to institute efforts to either reify and strengthen the challenged national identity or solidify a new national identity. Thus, even as domestic legislation was passed to bring Turkish policies into convergence with the E.U., and some political factions sought to institutionalize a more inclusive

¹⁷ While the practice of polygamy was outlawed in Turkey in 1926, it has continued to be practiced and is not seen as uncommon, particularly in the province of Kilis (Bülbül, 2016).

Turkish national identity, the conservative AKP instrumentalized Islam and exploited disaffection with E.U. conditionalities to activate and discursively strengthen the ethno-religious understanding of Turkish identity deeply rooted in Turkish history and tradition (Apaydın & Müftüler-Baç, 2022; A. Kaya, 2015). This became more apparent following the attempted coup and subsequent purges of the bureaucracy in 2016, even as the Syrian refugee crisis continued, with increasing politicization of immigration and calls to repatriate Syrian refugees (Al-Mehdi, 2019; Ozsoy, 2022; Tremblay, 2017; Uras, 2022).

4.6 Conclusion

It is with the full context of Turkey in mind—a history of ethno-religious based citizenship and exclusion of minority populations, current nationalism and ongoing nation-building activities, and recently politicized naturalization through marriage—that I will present the findings from my research. This chapter has shown that the territorial and cultural boundaries of “Turkishness” have been reified time and again through state policies and practices seeking ethno-religious homogeneity, including (forced) migration, discriminatory labor market and settlement policies, and preferential treatment of ethnic kin who immigrate to Turkey. In the Turkish imagination, clear ethnic and cultural boundaries remain around the idea of “Turkishness,” despite apparent moves toward multiculturalism over the past few decades, with growing ethnonationalism and politicization of immigration. Thus, while official policies may outwardly conform to E.U. accession requirements, an ethno-religious understanding of Turkishness remains influential in public attitudes as well as in policy and practice.

The remaining chapters of this dissertation are structured as follows. Chapter 5 presents immigration and marriage statistics from Turkey, which serve to situate survey respondents within the larger environment. Chapters 6-8 describe the three stages of the current marriage-based naturalization application process, with each chapter focusing on survey respondents and interviewees’ experiences with a single stage: documentation, police interviews, and interviews with the Citizenship Application Review Commission. Chapter 9 describes themes raised during interviews with would-be citizens, consultants, and attorneys vis-à-vis themes of the literature review. Chapter 10 concludes this study and recommends potential avenues for further exploration.



CHAPTER 5. EXAMINING THE TURKISH CONTEXT THROUGH ANALYSIS OF STATISTICAL AND SURVEY DATA

5.1 *Introduction*

In this chapter, I examine statistical data for clues regarding the role(s) of the Turkish national identity in cases of naturalization through marriage. Demographic factors are examined for present day information as well as longer term trends (e.g., who naturalizes through marriage and where they are from), with an eye toward whether and to what extent particular demographic factors might impact an applicant's ability to naturalize through marriage. According to the international marriage research nexus literature, identifiable gender and ethnic patterns can be found in marriage-based immigration and naturalization (e.g., women more likely to naturalize than men, ethnic differences in naturalization trajectories and difficulty based on country of origin, concern with integration, and so on). I therefore analyze survey data for evidence as to whether Turkey is subject to the same trends in terms of who is naturalizing and the characteristics that might impact this process. I find evidence of self-selection in naturalization aspirations as well disparities in navigating the naturalization process for individuals of particular backgrounds.

5.2 *The Turkish context: Statistical data*

In light of domestic and international push and pull factors described in Chapter 4, I analyze available data related to immigration and marriage in Turkey. I begin by examining information provided by Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu (Turkish Statistical Institute, TÜİK) regarding naturalization through marriage. Unfortunately, little data on this topic available. Available data highlight the top countries of origin for the period 2000-2011; see Table 5-1: Top 10 countries of persons obtaining citizenship through marriage, 2000-2011, by gender and nationality. Most of the top countries of origin for this period are home to populations of ethnic Turks (or ethnic Kurds, to a lesser extent), have strong tourism links with Turkey, and/or were part of the former U.S.S.R., all factors linked to immigration to Turkey (see, for example, Akyüz, 2017; Bloch, 2011, 2017; de Bel-Air, 2016; İçduygu & Aksel, 2013, 2015; Pusch, 2016). This data also indicates that, overall, women make up the largest percentage of persons obtaining citizenship through marriage in this period, even after men became eligible to apply for citizenship through marriage in 2003, though

men outnumber women in a few instances. There is also a significant, across-the-board increase in the number of both women and men obtaining citizenship through marriage beginning in 2007. It is notable that this occurred after the 2003 amendments to the Turkish citizenship law, which imposed new requirements on would-be citizens by marriage, including that the applicant be married to the Turkish spouse for three years before becoming eligible for naturalization.

Interestingly, this naturalization data also indicates that a (very) small number of men from Bulgaria and Romania were able to naturalize through marriage prior to the passage and implementation of the 2003 amendments to Law no. 403. I can only offer conjecture as to why these men were able to obtain citizenship. Both Romania and Bulgaria are home to populations of ethnic Turks, which raises the possibility of that such individuals were of Turkish heritage. However, Turkey provides an alternate pathway to citizenship for those of “Turkish descent or heritage” that did not have the sex-based restriction of the pre-2003 citizenship framework, making it less likely that these individuals were of Turkish descent or heritage. Article 7 of Law No. 403 did provide a naturalization route through “exceptional citizenship for “those who are married to a Turkish citizen and their resident children” (Law No. 403 Türk Vatandaşlığı Kanunu [Turkish Citizenship Law], 1964) in addition to marriage-based naturalization (available only to women), so it is plausible these (non-Turk) Bulgarian and Romanian men were married to Turkish citizens and had a particular background or skill the Turkish state found advantageous. The rarity of it, however, highlights the difference between how foreign spouses were treated based on sex: women were allowed to become “Turkish” based on marriage alone while men had to prove their worth.

Table 5-1: Top 10 countries of persons obtaining citizenship through marriage, 2000-2011, by gender and nationality
Source: TUIK (2019)

	2000-2002		2003-2005		2006-2008		2009-2011		Total	Total	Total
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	
Bulgaria	49	2	14	4	831	298	1,594	373	2,488	677	3,165
Azerbaijan	108		58	5	740	94	1,678	114	2,584	213	2,797
Syria	50		19	25	354	407	899	387	1,322	819	2,141
Russian Federation	55		47		409	5	1,263	10	1,774	15	1,789
Moldova	75		42		312	8	771	11	1,200	19	1,219
Ukraine	29		23		256	4	628	10	936	14	950
Romania	82	1	35	4	260	38	384	33	761	76	837
United Kingdom (U.K.)	38		18	5	201	80	248	94	505	179	684
Kazakhstan	25		18		149	4	371	10	563	14	577
Iran	8		6	21	73	178	132	139	219	338	557

I then turned to areas with more data available: marriage and immigration. Using publicly available data from TÜİK (2022b, 2022c), I put foreign resident numbers by origin side-by-side with marriages between Turks and foreigners, which highlights interesting, often gendered, distinctions between immigrant populations; see Table 5-2: Selected immigrants married to Turks vs. immigrant populations (total 2009-2021) and Table D-1: Immigrants married to Turks vs. immigrant populations (total 2009-2021) in Appendix D. While data for the period 2009-2021 indicates there have been a similar number of female and male migrants (901,179 and 890,857, respectively), there are identifiable differences in marriage patterns. There are countries of origin, for example, from which only or primarily women have married Turkish citizens, including Russia but also Indonesia and Japan. There are others from which only or mostly men have married Turkish citizens, such as Australia, Egypt, and Spain; women predominate among foreign spouses, however, with more than four times as many foreign women than foreign men marrying Turks.¹⁸ In some cases, ethnicized and gendered immigration patterns are a clear continuation of ongoing intermarriage trends, with higher rates (as a rough percentage) of specific immigrant populations marrying Turkish citizens. Such cases may reflect historical/ethnic connections (e.g., Azerbaijan and Bulgaria) and/or high rates of labor immigration, including higher status circular migration related to education and tourism (e.g., Russia and Sweden). Other populations have a strikingly low rate of intermarriage with Turkish citizens (e.g., Ethiopia and Libya). This could indicate populations that are more recently established and/or less assimilated into Turkish society as well as countries of origin without strong connections to Turkey. With that said, however, such a

¹⁸ Women's (apparent) dominance in international marriage immigration and citizenship has been linked to country-specific factors (e.g., hypergamy in South-North immigration, regional upheavals, a shortage of marriageable women resulting in concerted efforts to import brides, family reunification, etc.); see, for example, Bean and Brown (2015), Brettell (2015), Castles et al. (2015), de Hart (2015a), Hollifield and Wong (2015), Kim and Kilkey (2017), and Robinson (2007). With *prima facie* non-discriminatory immigration regimes widespread, however, alternative explanations such as widespread traditions of patrilocality and/or women exercising agency in finding alternative means to immigrate, remain, and access the labor market should also be considered; see, for example, Ahsan Ullah and Chatteraj (2023), Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2010), Brettell (2015), FitzGerald (2015), Le Bail (2017), and Williams (2010). Differences in state's definitions and categorizations between international "labor," "family reunification" (or family formation), and "marriage" immigration also obscure the reality on the ground wherein an individual falls into multiple immigration categories but can only be counted for a single "type."

comparison provides an interesting glimpse of possible future spouses and would-be citizens of Turkey and provides a framework for comparing and understanding both survey results and interview data regarding international marriage and naturalized citizenship.

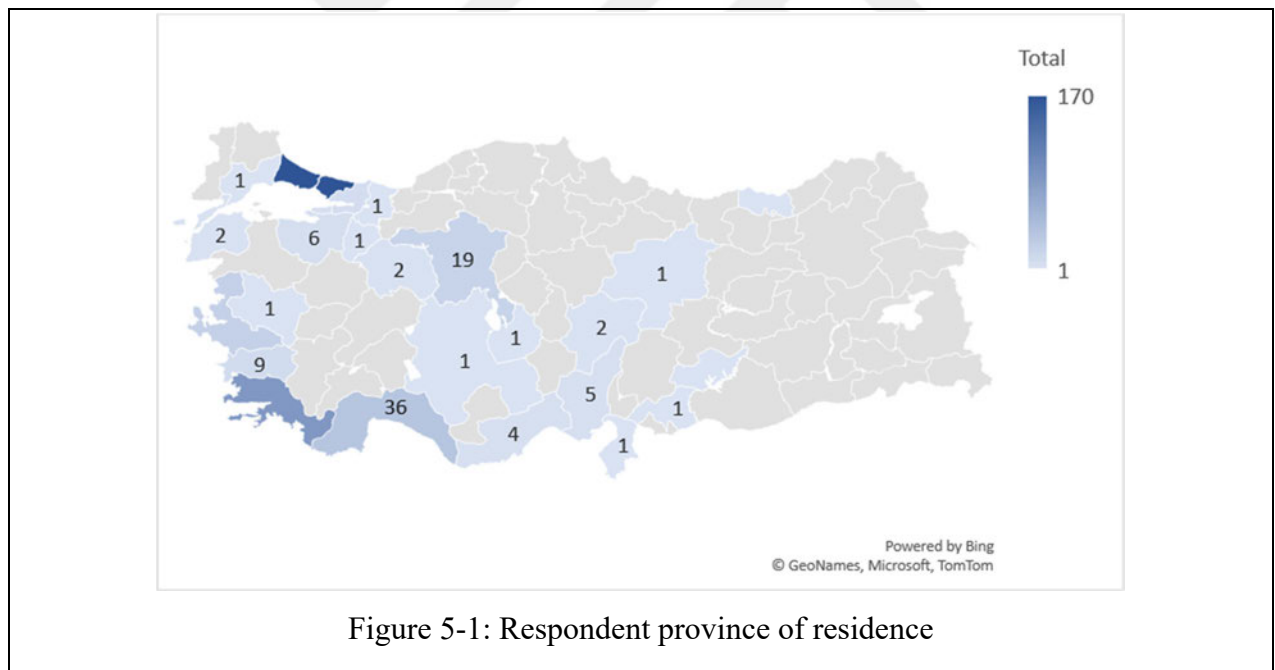


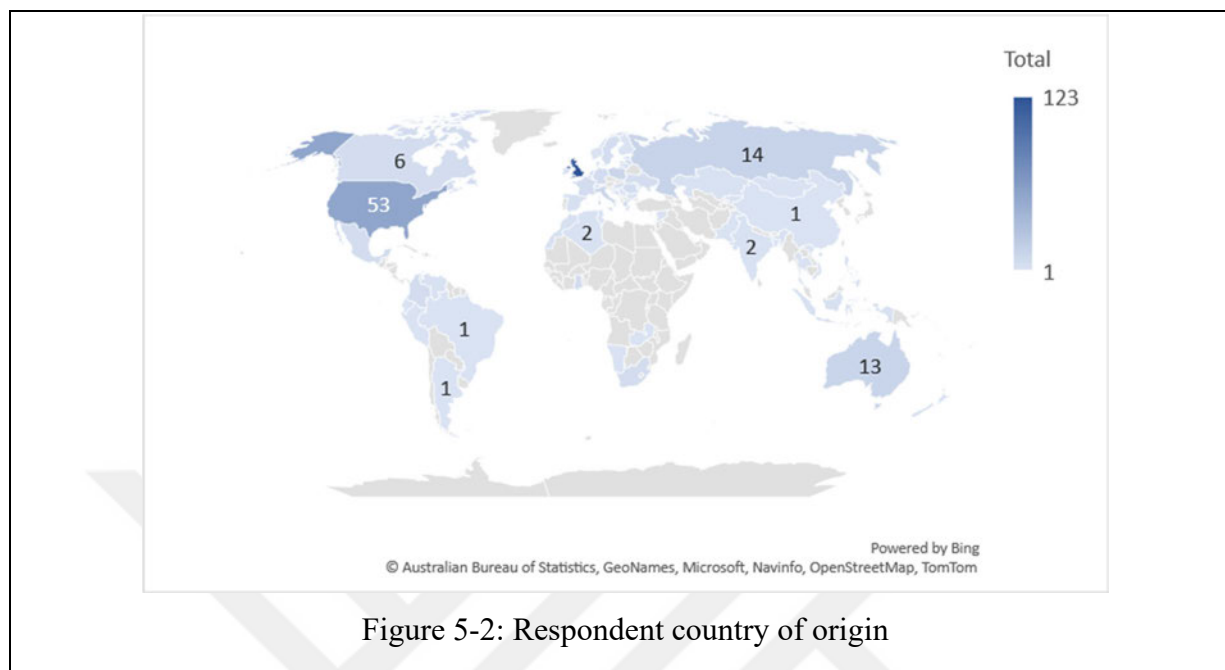
Table 5-2: Selected immigrants married to Turks vs. immigrant populations (total 2009-2021)
Source: TÜİK (2022b, 2022c)

Citizenship	Marriage total (Female)	Marriage total (Male)	Total migrants	Total migrants (Female)	Total migrants (Male)	Marriage % (Female)	Marriage % (Male)
Australia		204	1,202	544	658	0.00%	31.00%
Azerbaijan	25,046	1,304	68,562	37,072	31,490	67.56%	4.14%
Bulgaria	7,479	973	15,426	8,892	6,534	84.11%	14.89%
Egypt	104	581	34,162	14,507	19,655	0.72%	2.96%
Ethiopia			6,633	3,305	3,328	0.00%	0.00%
Finland	630	64	844	494	350	127.53%	18.29%
Indonesia	1,647		10,219	7,104	3,115	23.18%	0.00%
Italy	40	851	2,386	912	1,474	4.39%	57.73%
Japan	490		1,507	831	676	58.97%	0.00%
Libya			24,188	10,242	13,946	0.00%	0.00%
Russia	17,112	219	66,786	41,616	25,170	41.12%	0.87%
Spain		392	1,440	600	840	0.00%	46.67%
Sweden	863	352	3,919	1,732	2,187	49.83%	16.10%
All others	189,224	44,865	1,554,762	773,328	781,434	24.47%	5.74%
Total	242,635	49,805	1,792,036	901,179	890,857	26.92%	5.59%

5.3 *Survey respondents: By the numbers*

Excluding survey respondents who did not complete a majority of the survey as well as those who naturalized other than by marriage and fall outside the scope of this research yields 389 responses (342 women and 47 men) for analysis. Respondents reside throughout Turkey but are concentrated in the provinces of Istanbul (172) and Muğla (96), highlighted in Figure 5-1: Respondent province of residence. Respondents came from more than 60 countries; see Figure 5-2: Respondent country of origin and Table 5-3: Respondent country of origin by sex. However, it is clear from even a cursory comparison of survey respondent origins and the top countries of those gaining Turkish citizenship through marriage that respondents from certain countries are vastly overrepresented among survey respondents (see Table 5-4: Comparison of top nationalities naturalizing through marriage (2000-2011) and survey respondents).





Country	Female respondent	Male respondent	Total	
Algeria	2	0	2	1%
Argentina	1	0	1	0%
Australia	10	3	13	3%
Bangladesh	0	1	1	0%
Belgium	4	0	4	1%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	3	0	3	1%
Brazil	1	0	1	0%
Bulgaria	2	0	2	1%
Canada	6	0	6	2%
China	1	0	1	0%
Colombia	5	1	6	2%
Croatia	1	0	1	0%
Denmark	1	1	2	1%
Ecuador	1	0	1	0%

Table 5-3: Respondent country of origin by sex				
Country	Female respondent	Male respondent	Total	
Estonia	1	0	1	0%
Finland	1	0	1	0%
France	6	0	6	2%
Germany	5	1	6	2%
Ghana	1	5	6	2%
Greece	5	2	7	2%
Hong Kong	1	0	1	0%
Hungary	3	0	3	1%
India	2	0	2	1%
Indonesia	3	0	3	1%
Ireland	4	0	4	1%
Italy	7	4	11	3%
Kazakhstan	2	0	2	1%
Kyrgyzstan	2	0	2	1%
Latvia	10	0	10	3%
Lebanon	1	0	1	0%
Lithuania	4	0	4	1%
Malta	1	0	1	0%
Mexico	6	0	6	2%
Moldova	2	0	2	1%
Mongolia	1	0	1	0%
Morocco	2	1	3	1%
Namibia	1	0	1	0%
Netherlands	4	1	5	1%
New Zealand	3	0	3	1%
Norway	1	0	1	0%
Pakistan	0	1	1	0%
Peru	1	0	1	0%

Table 5-3: Respondent country of origin by sex				
Country	Female respondent	Male respondent	Total	
Philippines	3	0	3	1%
Poland	12	0	12	3%
Romania	6	0	6	2%
Russia	13	1	14	4%
Serbia	2	0	2	1%
Singapore	1	0	1	0%
South Africa	6	0	6	2%
Spain	3	0	3	1%
Sweden	5	0	5	1%
Switzerland	1	1	2	1%
Syria	1	1	2	1%
Thailand	2	0	2	1%
Tunisia	1	0	1	0%
U.K.	112	11	123	32%
Ukraine	5	0	5	1%
U.S.A.	44	9	53	14%
U.S.S.R.	1	0	1	0%
Venezuela	2	0	2	1%
Vietnam	1	0	1	0%
Zambia	1	0	1	0%
No response	2	3	5	1%
Total	342	47	389	100%

Table 5-4: Comparison of top nationalities naturalizing through marriage (2000-2011) and survey respondents Source TUIK (2019)					
Previous nationality	Total female naturalizations	Total male naturalizations	Country total	# Survey respondents	% Survey respondents (389)
Bulgaria	2,488	677	3,165	2	0.5%
Azerbaijan	2,584	213	2,797	0	0%
Syria	1,322	819	2,141	2	0.5%
Russian Federation ¹⁹	1,774	15	1,789	15	3.9%
Moldova	1,200	19	1,219	2	0.5%
Ukraine	936	14	950	5	1.3%
Romania	761	76	837	6	1.5%
United Kingdom (U.K.)	505	179	684	123	31.6%
Kazakhstan	563	14	577	2	0.5%
Iran	219	338	557	0	0%

¹⁹ This figure includes both those who indicated the Russian Federation and those who listed the U.S.S.R. as their country of origin on the survey.

Many respondents indicated they are not currently married; see Figure 5-3: Respondent relationship status by sex. Overall, a much higher percentage of women reported currently being married (81.6%), though a majority of men are married as well (59.6%). A far larger percentage of men reported being either being divorced (17% men vs. 7.3% of women) or a status of “other” (21% vs 9% of women), which includes responses such as “living together,” “committed relationship,” and “cohabitating.” This is because the online survey solicitation did not specify that respondents needed to currently be married to the partner who made them eligible for citizenship. Considering the pressure immigration and naturalization may place on a relationship, anyone who was eligible to apply for Turkish citizenship through marriage or who had already done so was encouraged to respond.

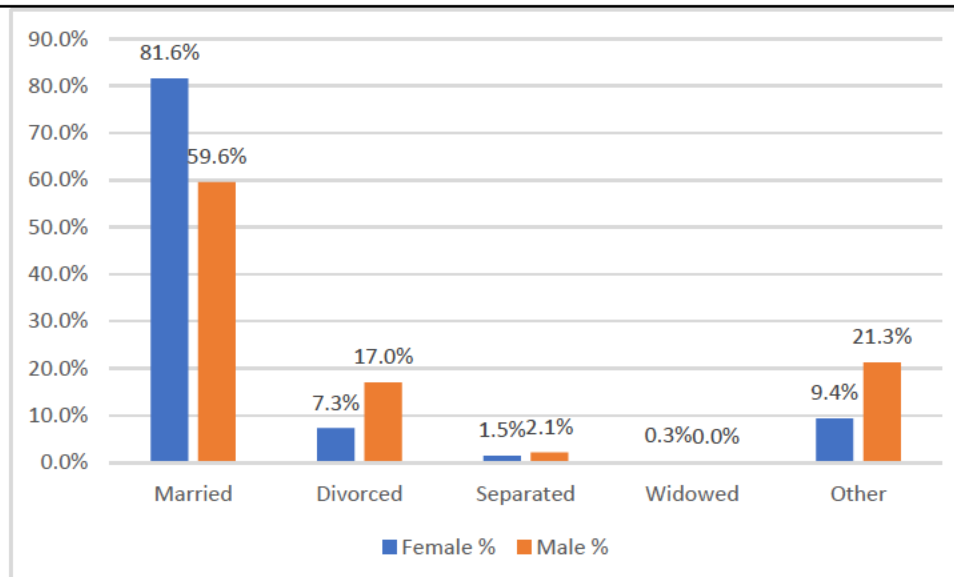
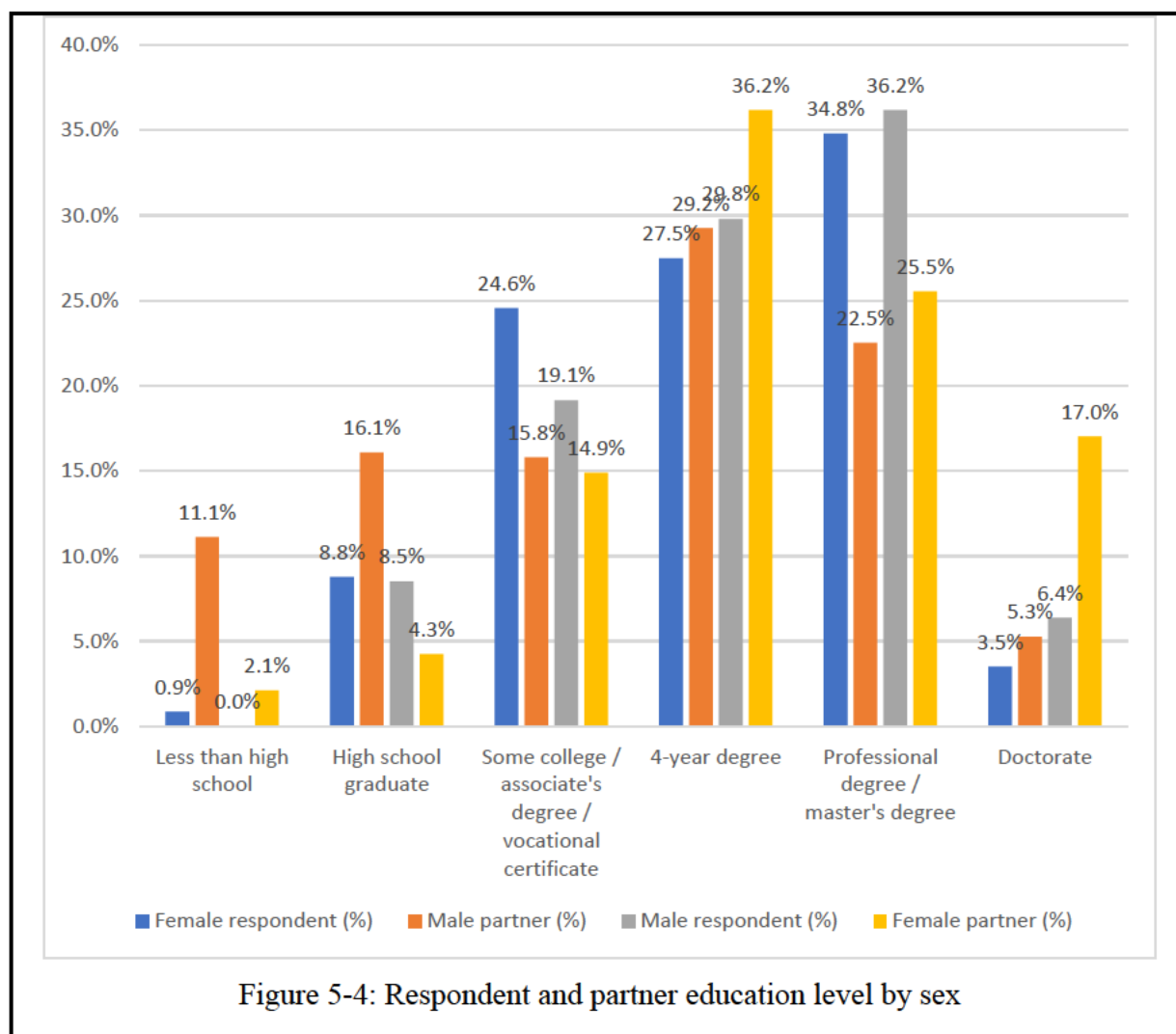


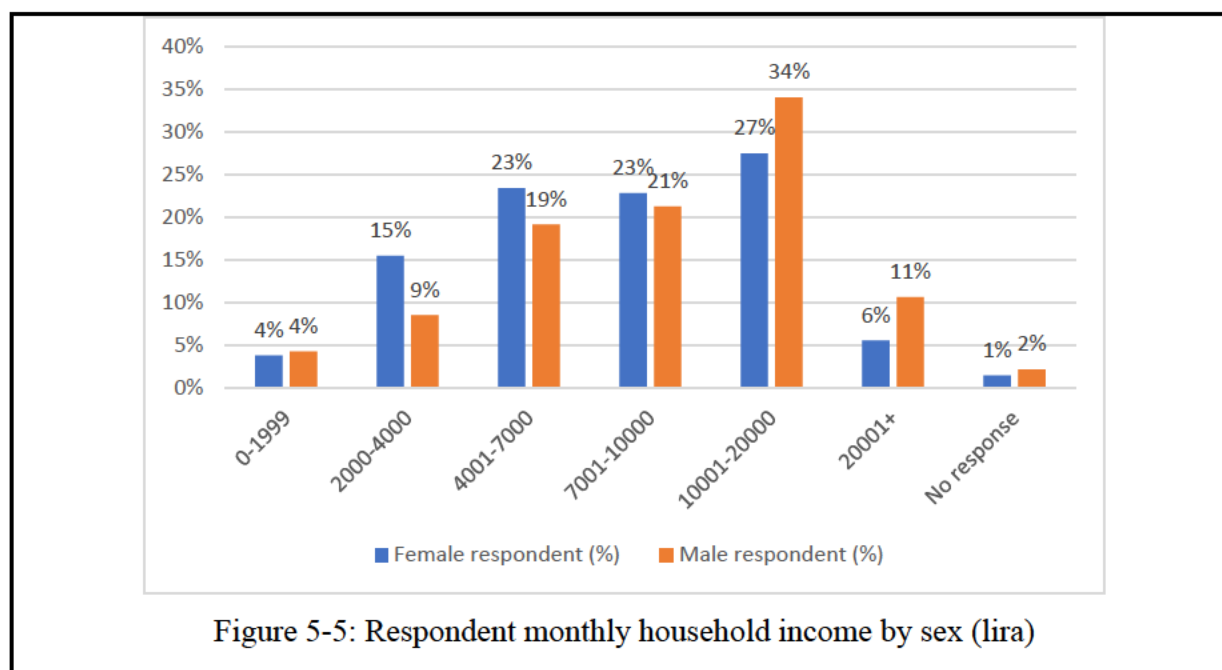
Figure 5-3: Respondent relationship status by sex

Respondents and their partners have a variety of educational backgrounds; see Figure 5-4: Respondent and partner education level by sex. The largest percentage of female respondents have a professional degree (119, 35%), with only a few having less than a high school education (3, 0.9%). The largest percentage of male respondents also have a professional degree (17, 36%), but none have less than a high school education. Both male and female Turkish partners most frequently have a four-year degree (100, 29% and 17, 36%, respectively). Male Turkish partners

showed the highest degree of variation in education level; while more than one-quarter of male Turkish partners have a high school level education or less (27%), 18 (5%) male Turkish partners have a doctoral degree. Respondents' (male) partners are better educated than the general population, in which about 17% of men have a four-year degree, 2% a professional degree, and less than 1% a doctoral degree (Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu [Turkish Statistical Institute], 2022a). Female Turkish partners are similarly better educated than the overall population, with 36% possessing a 4-year degree, 26% a professional degree, and 17% a doctoral degree; among the Turkish population, 15% of women have a four-year degree, 2% a professional degree, and less than 1% a doctoral degree (Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu [Turkish Statistical Institute], 2022a).



The largest percentage of both female and male survey respondents reported a monthly household income level of 10,001 - 20,000 Turkish lira (₺); see Figure 5-5: Respondent monthly household income by sex (lira).²⁰ Notably, an equal percentage of female and male survey respondents reported an income of ₺0 - 1999 per month (4%), but a larger percentage of male respondents reported incomes of both ₺10,001 - 20,000 (34% men vs. 27% women) and ₺20,001+ (11% men, 6% women). For context, the average monthly gross income in Turkey in 2019 was just over ₺4,000 (\$705) and the mean annual household disposable income was ₺69,349 (\$12,219) (Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu [Turkish Statistical Institute], 2020).²¹ Of 389 respondents, 317 (81%) have an average or above average household income.



²⁰ According to *ExchangeRates.org.uk*, the average Turkish lira (TRY) to U.S. dollar (USD) exchange rate in 2019 was 0.1762. Income groups in USD are thus \$0-\$352.22, \$352.40-\$704.80, \$704.98-\$1233.40, \$1233.58-\$1762.00, \$1762.18-\$3524, \$3524.18+.

²¹ According to TÜİK, the household disposable income is derived by taking into account the size and composition of the household. It is used here solely to provide additional context for the relative socio-economic position of respondents.

5.4 *Survey data and citizenship*

As a legal status, citizenship is deceptively simple: one is, or is not, a citizen. However, there are multiple possible divisions or potential categorizations of would-be and potential citizens. For the purposes of this research and with the Turkish legal context in mind, I created five categories of interest: those applying for Turkish citizenship in 2002 and before, when citizenship through marriage was virtually automatic for women, (38), those who successfully applied in 2003 and after (100), those who have applied and are waiting or were rejected (30), those who have not yet applied for citizenship (113), and those who are not interested in applying for citizenship (108); see Table 5-5: Survey respondents by naturalization group. Those who have applied, whether or not successful, are termed “applicants” when discussing results of the online survey.

	Women	Women (%)	Men	Men (%)	Total	Total %
Applied prior to 2003	37	10.8%	1	2.1%	38	10%
Successful applicants (2003+)	87	25.4%	13	27.7%	100	26%
Applied (waiting or rejected)	28	8.2%	2	4.3%	30	8%
Not yet applied	100	29.2%	13	27.7%	113	29%
Not interested	90	26.3%	18	38.3%	108	28%

According to the international marriage research nexus literature, there are identifiable gender and ethnic patterns in marriage-based immigration and naturalization in the European and U.S. contexts. Demographic factors such as sex, income, religion, ethnicity, and length of stay in the host country, among others, have been found to play a role in the naturalization decision and process (Alexander, 2013; Constant et al., 2008; Dronkers & Vink, 2012; Graeber, 2016; Niedomysl et al., 2010; Orgad, 2016; Pantoja & Gershon, 2006; Yang, 1994). I therefore utilized the opportunity offered by the online survey to determine whether and how similar patterns might exist in Turkey. Information from the online survey was examined to determine whether certain demographic characteristics might impact the naturalization process with a focus on who is—and is not—interested in becoming a Turkish citizen.

Because citizenship acquisition through marriage was (nearly) automatic prior to 2003, I focus on the latter four groups—351 respondents—unless otherwise noted- to determine whether there are significant differences between successful applicants (100, 28%), waiting applicants (30, 9%), those who have not applied (113, 32%), and those who are not interested (108, 31%). Where applicable, I also highlight differences between successful applicants (100) and those who are still waiting for a decision on their applications (30).²²

5.4.1 The impact of specific factors on naturalization aspiration and success among online survey respondents

Scholarship in the international marriage research nexus highlights specific demographic and individual factors that have the potential to impact the naturalization aspirations as well as the process itself (Andrejuk, 2016; Aptekar, 2016; Bauböck, 2006b; Dronkers & Vink, 2012; Graeber, 2016; Kraler, 2006). The literature has also made clear that disparate outcomes, particularly those related to more subjective criteria, may be intentional or unintentional and result from formal policies as well as discretionary decision making (see, for example, Alpert et al., 2005; Armenta, 2016; Bastien, 2009; Charsley & Liversage, 2015; de Leeuw & van Wichelen, 2012; Leinonen & Pellander, 2014; Ross, 2014; White et al., 2015). In particular, I examine online survey data for evidence whether applicant sex, income, age, level of education, region of origin, ethnic or religious background affect applicant naturalization aspirations or process. While each of the examined characteristics could be salient for many types of would-be citizens, I argue they could have particular importance for marriage-based naturalization applicants. This is because certain factors, including a large age difference between the applicant and spouse, have been shown in other contexts to create suspicion of a “fake” marriage in bureaucratic officials charged with overseeing the naturalization process (see, for example, Blackledge, 2016; Eggebo, 2013; Fernandez, 2013; Williams, 2010). Other factors are related to the Turkish national identity itself, of particular importance in international marriage and related immigration and naturalization (see discussions in Chapter 2 and Chapter 4).

²² With a total of 130 “applicants,” 30 of whom are still waiting for a decision, instances where more than 25% of “applicants” are still waiting may also be a finding of interest warranting further examination.

General characteristics: Sex and income level

While men have historically been denied access to marriage-based citizenship, this is no longer the case in Turkey.²³ With that said, however, women remain more likely to naturalize than men. This may be due to multiple factors. For example, Dronkers and Vink (2012) and Money et al. (2023) both find that men are less likely to naturalize than women unless the citizenship of the host state is perceived as sufficiently “better” than the citizenship of the home state (e.g., granting higher social status, enhancing mobility, or providing economic advantages). Alexander (Alexander, 2013), Bonjour and de Hart (2013), Brettell (Brettell, 2017), Charsley and Liversage (2015), de Hart (2015a), Eggebo (2013), Kim and Kilkey (2017), Leinonen and Pellander (2014), Williams (2010), Wray (2015) and others have also noted differences in both perceptions regarding male and female marriage immigrants and their treatment by immigration officials, particularly with reference to the performance of prescribed gender roles. Either or both could be true—host state biases regarding male marriage immigrants may make men less inclined to pursue naturalization, particularly if the citizenship is not seen as sufficiently valuable with regard to rights and benefits.

In determining whether sex plays a role in marriage-based naturalization in Turkey, I first eliminated those who had obtained Turkish citizenship through marriage prior to 2003, as men were generally ineligible to naturalize through marriage. I compare the number of individuals in each group by sex; see Table 5-6: Naturalization group by sex. Nearly equal percentages of female and male respondents have obtained Turkish citizenship. There is a significant difference, however, in the percentage of respondents who are not interested in obtaining Turkish citizenship, with 39% of male respondents versus 30% of female respondents indicating they have no interest in applying for Turkish citizenship, indicating that women are more likely than men to naturalize via marriage in Turkey as well. This may be due to a number of factors, as discussed in 2.3 Factors influencing naturalization aspirations and at the end of this section.

²³ See 2.3 Factors influencing naturalization aspirations and 2.4 The multi-faceted impacts of gender on marriage-based naturalization.

Table 5-6: Naturalization group by sex									
	2003+		Applied		Not yet applied		Not interested		Total
Female respondent	87	29%	28	9%	100	33%	90	30%	305
Male respondent	13	28%	2	4%	13	28%	18	39%	46

A higher income level has been linked with a propensity to naturalize (see, for example, Dronkers & Vink, 2012; Niedomysl et al., 2010; Yang, 1994). This may be due to multiple reasons. First, there is an element of self-selection in naturalization as the process can be costly and time intensive even when specific income requirements are not present. This necessitates that would-be citizens have sufficient resources in terms of income and time to navigate the procedure. Host country specific policies, particularly related to income and taxation, may also play a role in naturalization decision making. Applicants with lower income levels may also be perceived as less desirable citizens by bureaucratic officials, or may raise officials' suspicions, leading the official to require additional documentation and slowing down the application process.

After eliminating survey respondents who naturalized prior to 2003, I investigate whether there might be a connection between income level and interest in applying for Turkish citizenship. Comparing information across groups, I find some evidence of self-selection and/or disparate impacts in naturalization as respondents with very low or very high levels of income are less likely to apply; see Table 5-7: Average monthly income level by group (lira).

Table 5-7: Average monthly income level by group (lira)				
Income	2003+	Applied	Not yet applied	Not interested
Average (female respondent)	8,908.00	7,984.20	7,577.00	11,229.00
Average (male respondent)	9,418.00	5,501.00	10,079.00	11,973.00
Average	8,971.00	7,918.80	7,864.00	11,355.00

Examining this data in more detail provides clear differences between groups; see Table D-2: Monthly income level by group in lira in Appendix D. For example, only two respondents making ₺0 - ₺1999 per month have applied for Turkish citizenship through marriage, and both are still waiting for a determination on their applications. The other 12 respondents at this income level have either not yet applied (11) or are not interested in applying (1). Beginning with those earning ₺10,000 or more per month, there is a sharp increase in the percentage of respondents who are not interested in obtaining Turkish citizenship; 56 of 120 (47%) respondents earning ₺10,000 or more per month are not interested in Turkish citizenship compared with an average of 23% at lower income levels. It is also possible that applicants at higher income levels who want Turkish citizenship are processed faster than those at lower income levels. As Table D-2: Monthly income level by group in lira details, few “applicants”—six of 35 or 17%—at higher income levels (i.e., ₺10,000 or more per month) are still waiting for a determination, notably less than the overall percentage of those waiting compared to those who have been approved (23%). For those at the middle income levels, however, higher rates of “applicants” are waiting. For those earning ₺4,000 – ₺7,000 per month, 10 of 35 “applicants” (29%) and 9 of 36 “applicants” (25%) of those earning ₺7,001 – ₺10,000 per month are still waiting for a determination. In addition to self-selection, this overall pattern related to income may indicate greater bureaucratic scrutiny or discretion applied at lower income levels—leading to rejection or a longer wait—while bureaucratic scrutiny and/or respondent desire for citizenship decrease as income increases.

As previously noted, among online survey respondents, women were more likely to be interested in applying for Turkish citizenship than men. This is consistent with available data on marriage-based naturalization in Turkey, as in other contexts. Online survey data also indicates that those earning less than ₺10,001 are more likely to be interested in Turkish citizenship, and those making at least ₺2000 per month more likely to be successful.

Factors related to perceptions of marriage validity: Age, education, and “Russian” origins

The literature on cross-border marriage migration and naturalization suggests that certain demographic characteristics, including large age gaps or differences in level of education between partners, might raise suspicion with regard to whether a marriage is valid, thereby causing difficulties in naturalization and affecting naturalization status (see, for example, Bonjour & de

Hart, 2013; Cole, 2014; Eggebo, 2013; Fernandez, 2013; Töttös, 2015). Recognizing the strong association between prostitution and fake marriages with “Russian” women in the Turkish context, I added being from Russia or the former U.S.S.R. to this list. When applicants display these characteristics, bureaucratic officials may require additional “proof” of marriage validity (e.g., additional documentation, witnesses, interviews, etc.), thereby causing application processing delays or higher rates of denial for lack of documentation. It is also possible otherwise qualified applicants may choose not to apply for Turkish citizens for reasons related to these characteristics (e.g., retirement benefits); applicant age and education are therefore considered individually as well as in conjunction with the Turkish spouse.

Online survey respondents span a large age range. The oldest survey respondent was born in 1941; the youngest in 2000; see Figure 5-6: Respondent year of birth by sex. Eliminating those who obtained Turkish citizenship through marriage prior to 2003, I compare the remaining groups by age cohort to see if age itself could be correlated with citizenship status. As presented in Table 5-8: Survey respondent year of birth by naturalization group, younger foreigners, both men and women, are less likely to have applied for citizenship. Of those born in 1985 or later (126), only 15 (12%) have citizenship, while 28 (22%) have applied for citizenship, 42 (33%) have not yet applied, and 56 (44%) are not interested. Of the 225 respondents born 1940-1984, aged approximately 35+ at the time of the survey, 102 (45%) have applied for citizenship and the majority of applications have been successful.

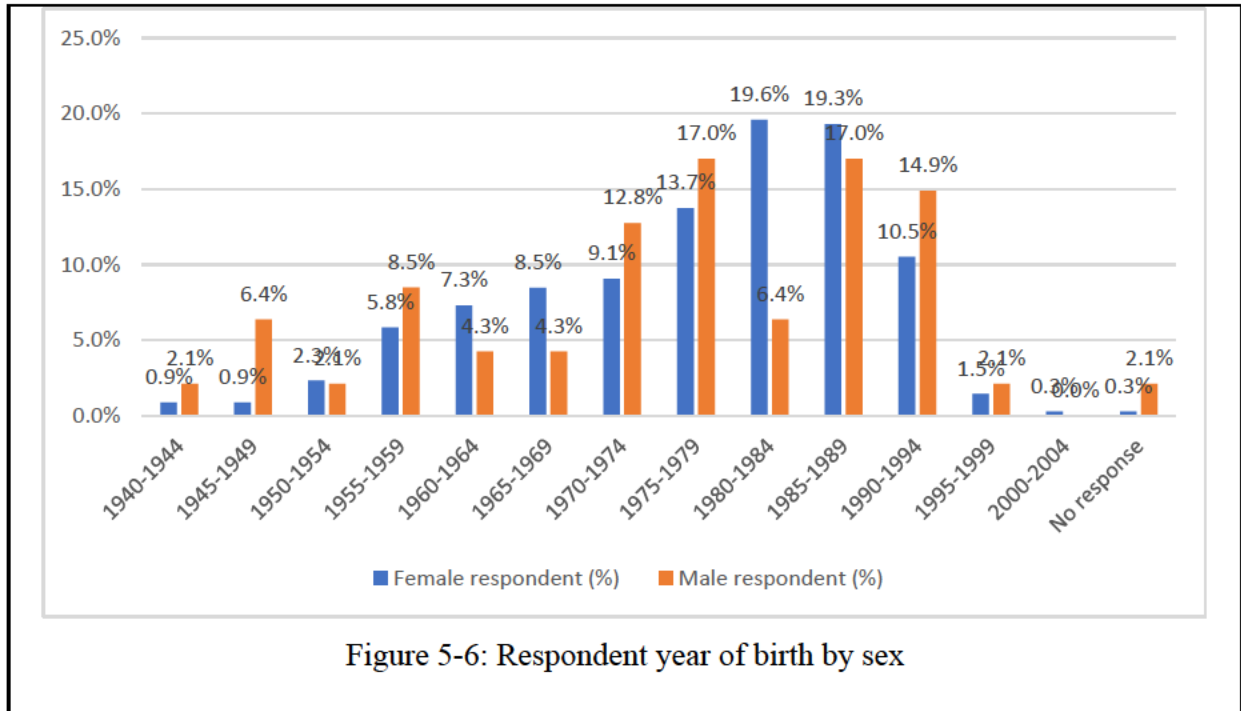


Table 5-8: Survey respondent year of birth by naturalization group

	Female respondent								
	2003+		Applied		Not yet applied		Not interested		Total
1940-1944	2	67%	0	0%	0	0%	1	33%	3
1945-1949	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	100%	2
1950-1954	2	33%	0	0%	2	33%	2	33%	6
1955-1959	6	50%	0	0%	4	33%	2	17%	12
1960-1964	3	18%	2	12%	9	53%	3	18%	17
1965-1969	7	37%	1	5%	8	42%	3	16%	19
1970-1974	15	54%	0	0%	9	32%	4	14%	28
1975-1979	17	39%	3	7%	15	34%	9	20%	44
1980-1984	22	34%	10	15%	16	25%	17	26%	65
1985-1989	11	17%	8	12%	17	26%	30	45%	66
1990-1994	1	3%	4	11%	17	47%	14	39%	36
1995-1999	0	0%	0	0%	3	60%	2	40%	5

Table 5-8: Survey respondent year of birth by naturalization group									
2000-2004	1	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1
No response	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%	1
Average age (years)	44		37		40		38		
	Male respondent								
	2003+		Applied		Not yet applied		Not interested		Total
1940-1944	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%	0	0%	1
1945-1949	0	0%	1	33%	1	33%	1	33%	3
1950-1954	0	---	0	---	0	---	0	---	0
1955-1959	3	75%	0	0%	1	25%	0	0%	4
1960-1964	1	50%	0	0%	0	0%	1	50%	2
1965-1969	0	0%	0	0%	1	50%	1	50%	2
1970-1974	5	83%	0	0%	0	0%	1	17%	6
1975-1979	1	13%	0	0%	4	50%	3	38%	8
1980-1984	1	33%	0	0%	0	0%	2	67%	3
1985-1989	0	0%	0	0%	2	25%	6	75%	8
1990-1994	2	29%	1	14%	2	29%	2	29%	7
1995-1999	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%	0	0%	1
2000-2004	0	---	0	---	0	---	0	---	0
No response	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%	1
Average age (years)	46		50		44		39		
	Totals								
	2003+		Applied		Not yet applied		Not interested		Total
1940-1944	2	50%	0	0%	1	25%	1	25%	4
1945-1949	0	0%	1	20%	1	20%	3	60%	5
1950-1954	2	33%	0	0%	2	33%	2	33%	6
1955-1959	9	56%	0	0%	5	31%	2	13%	16
1960-1964	4	21%	2	11%	9	47%	4	21%	19
1965-1969	7	33%	1	5%	9	43%	4	19%	21
1970-1974	20	59%	0	0%	9	26%	5	15%	34

Table 5-8: Survey respondent year of birth by naturalization group									
1975-1979	18	35%	3	6%	19	37%	12	23%	52
1980-1984	23	34%	10	15%	16	24%	19	28%	68
1985-1989	11	15%	8	11%	19	26%	36	49%	74
1990-1994	3	7%	5	12%	19	44%	16	37%	43
1995-1999	0	0%	0	0%	4	67%	2	33%	6
2000-2004	1	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1
No response	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	100%	2
Average age (years)	44		38		41		38		

I next look for significant age differences between partners. According to the literature, partners with a significant age difference may face greater scrutiny from bureaucratic officials due to stereotyped narratives that claim (female) marriage-based naturalization applicants are essentially trading their youth for citizenship (Alexander, 2013; Balistreri et al., 2017; Bonjour & de Hart, 2013; Töttös, 2015). These types of narratives can impact the naturalization process as officials may require such applicants to submit additional documentation or undergo additional interviews or other investigations. Overall, however, most survey respondents did not have a significant age difference with their partner. As Figure 5-7: Age difference, respondent to partner, by sex indicates, 51% of female respondents and 55% of male respondents were within five years of their spouse's age. Providing further contrast to this stereotype, Figure 5-7: Age difference, respondent to partner, by sex uses negative values in parentheses to indicate the respondent is younger than their partner. Doing so highlights an interesting, and unexpected, pattern. While both foreign men and women are partnered with Turks 10 or more years older than they are, only foreign women (30, 9%) are partnered with a Turkish person 10 or more years their *junior*; the left side of Figure 5-7 shows responses where the Turkish partner is older; the right side highlights where the foreign partner is older. This finding contradicts what is considered the “typical” pattern of the (much) younger bride and may indicate that the allure of a foreign bride could outweigh any potential social stigma of having an older wife. Examining those who naturalized after 2003 shows that couples with a significant age difference are less likely to have applied for citizenship through marriage; see Table 5-9: Age difference by group. Of the 56 couples with an age gap of 10 or more

years, 14 (25%) have successfully applied for citizenship, 20 (36%) have not yet applied, and 15 (27%) are not interested; seven respondents—one-third of applicants with a significant age difference—are still waiting for a decision. Put another way, comparing only those who applied during the same time period (2016-2019), only five of the 12 respondents with a significant age difference obtained citizenship through marriage. It is also notable that the female partner is older than the male partner in five of the seven cases where applicants are still waiting for a decision. This could be evidence of bureaucratic discretion at work, requiring such partners to provide additional information in order to prove the validity of their marriages and thereby slowing the application process.

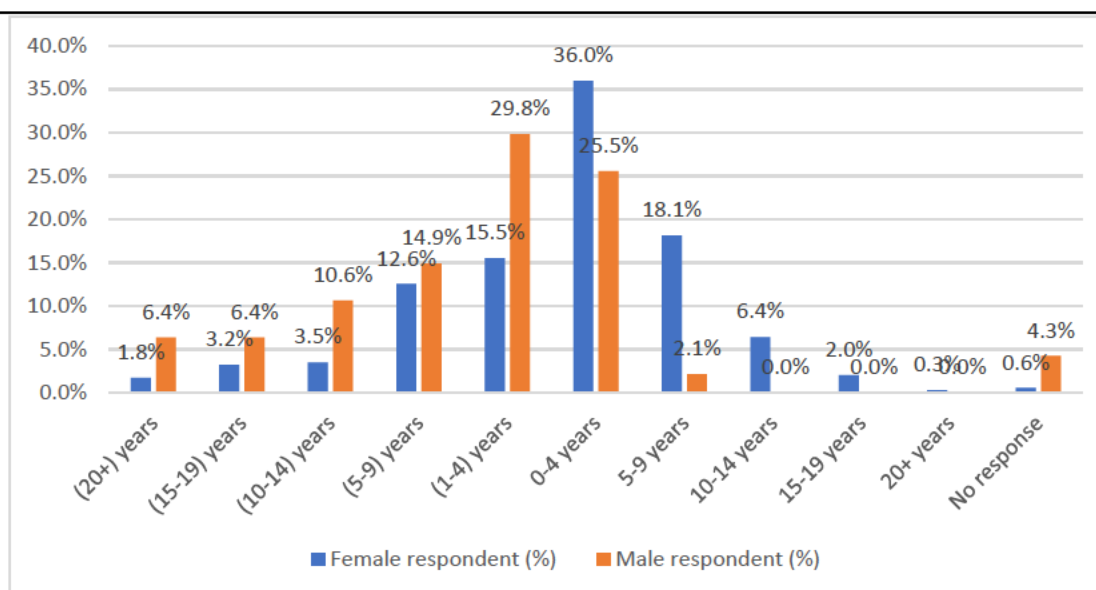


Figure 5-7: Age difference, respondent to partner, by sex

Table 5-9: Age difference by group

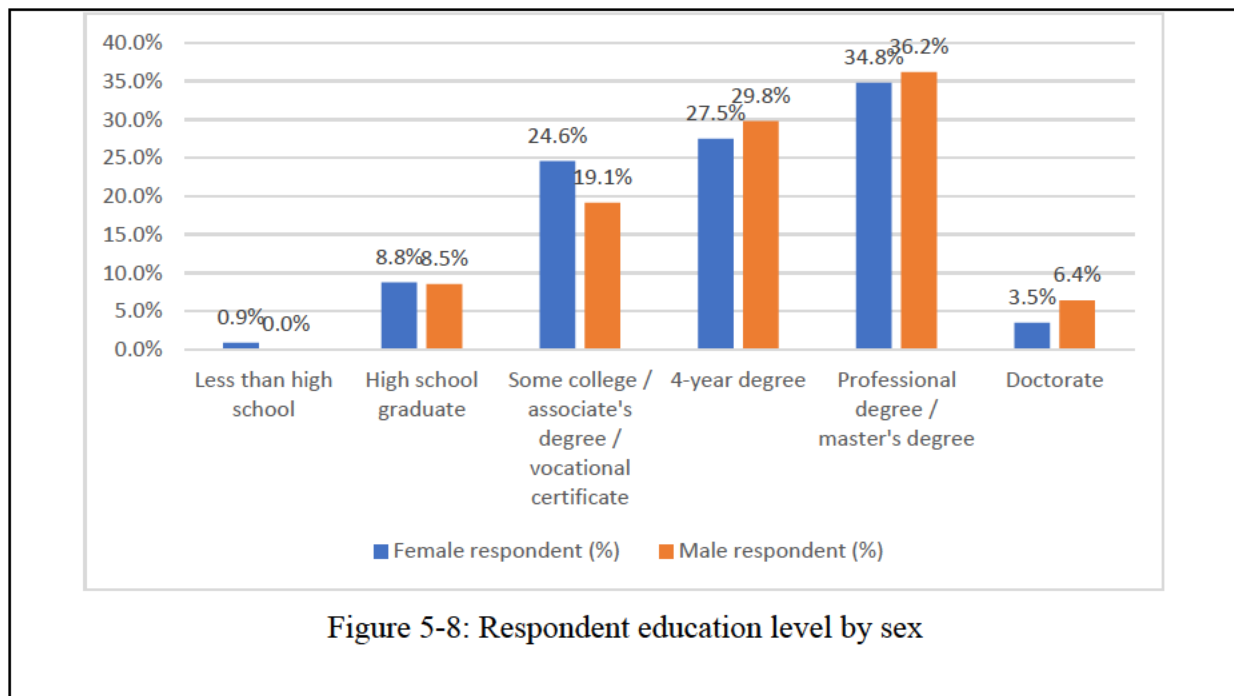
	Female respondent								
	2003+		Applied		Not yet applied		Not interested		Total
(20+) years	1	20%	0	0%	2	40%	2	40%	5
(15-19) years	2	18%	1	9%	4	36%	4	36%	11
(10-14) years	1	14%	1	14%	3	43%	2	29%	7
(5-9) years	9	25%	3	8%	18	50%	6	17%	36

Table 5-9: Age difference by group									
(1-4) years	11	22%	5	10%	20	41%	13	27%	49
0-4 years	42	37%	7	6%	33	29%	31	27%	113
5-9 years	16	27%	7	12%	11	19%	25	42%	59
10-14 years	3	19%	4	25%	5	31%	4	25%	16
15-19 years	2	33%	0	0%	3	50%	1	17%	6
20+ years	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%	1
No response	0	0%	0	0%	1	50%	1	50%	2
Average years ²⁴	4.8		6.1		5.7		5.9		
	Male respondent								
	2003+		Applied		Not yet applied		Not interested		Total
(20+) years	2	67%	0	0%	1	33%	0	0%	3
(15-19) years	0	0%	1	33%	1	33%	1	33%	3
(10-14) years	3	75%	0	0%	1	25%	0	0%	4
(5-9) years	2	29%	0	0%	2	29%	3	43%	7
(1-4) years	3	21%	1	7%	4	29%	6	43%	14
0-4 years	3	25%	0	0%	3	25%	6	50%	12
5-9 years	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%	0	0%	1
10-14 years	0	---	0	---	0	---	0	---	0
15-19 years	0	---	0	---	0	---	0	---	0
20+ years	0	---	0	---	0	---	0	---	0
No response	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	100%	2
Average years	7.8		9.5		6.5		3.9		
	Totals								
	2003+		Applied		Not yet applied		Not interested		Total
(20+) years	3	38%	0	0%	3	38%	2	25%	8
(15-19) years	2	14%	2	14%	5	36%	5	36%	14
(10-14) years	4	36%	1	9%	4	36%	2	18%	11

²⁴ Averages were calculated using the absolute value of the mid-point of each category.

Table 5-9: Age difference by group									
(5-9) years	11	26%	3	7%	20	47%	9	21%	43
(1-4) years	14	22%	6	10%	24	38%	19	30%	63
0-4 years	45	36%	7	6%	36	29%	37	30%	125
5-9 years	16	27%	7	12%	12	20%	25	42%	60
10-14 years	3	19%	4	25%	5	31%	4	25%	16
15-19 years	2	33%	0	0%	3	50%	1	17%	6
20+ years	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%	1
No response	0	0%	0	0%	1	25%	3	75%	4
Average years	5.2		6.3		5.8		5.6		

I next turn to the question of education. Online survey respondents are largely well-educated, with 151 (39%) respondents having a master's degree or higher; see Figure 5-8: Respondent education level by sex. Only three of 389 respondents have less than a high school education and 37 have no post-secondary education. After eliminating respondents who applied for naturalization prior to 2003, I next examine how respondents' level of education affects their naturalization status.



Survey respondents with very high or very low levels of education appear to be less likely to apply for Turkish citizenship through marriage; see Table 5-10: Education level by group. There are 32 respondents with a high school level education or less; of those, only 13 (41%) have applied. Level of education does not appear to impact the naturalization process itself, however, as only two of 13 “applicants” are still waiting on a decision.²⁵ When it comes to higher levels of education, respondents with a professional or master’s degree (129), only 47 (36%) respondents have applied for naturalization. Of those, 14 (30%) are still waiting. Of the 15 respondents with a doctorate, only 3 (20%) have applied; all have obtained citizenship. This lack of motivation to naturalize could indicate an element of self-selection and is likely related to income level as well. Those with low levels of education are likely in the lower income level categories as well. Such individuals are less likely to have access to the necessary time and financial resources necessary to apply for naturalization. On the other hand, those with high levels of education or income may face less difficulty in navigating the Turkish labor market and thus face less pressure to naturalize. Moreover, there may be an economic or social advantage to residency over citizenship for those who work in certain fields.

Table 5-10: Education level by group									
	Female respondent								
	2003+		Applied		Not yet applied		Not interested		Total
Less than high school	1	33%	0	0%	1	33%	1	33%	3
High school graduate	8	32%	1	4%	10	40%	6	24%	25
Some college	22	35%	6	10%	26	41%	9	14%	63
4-year degree	24	27%	8	9%	26	29%	31	35%	89
Professional degree	29	26%	13	12%	31	27%	40	35%	113

²⁵ In this chapter, the word “applicants” refers to respondents who applied for Turkish citizenship after 2003, regardless of whether they obtained it.

Table 5-10: Education level by group									
Doctorate	3	25%	0	0%	6	50%	3	25%	12
	Male respondent								
	2003		Applied		Not yet		Not int		Total
Less than high school	0	---	0	---	0	---	0	---	0
High school graduate	2	50%	1	25%	1	25%	0	0%	4
Some college	4	44%	0	0%	2	22%	3	33%	9
4-year degree	3	21%	0	0%	6	43%	5	36%	14
Professional degree	4	25%	1	6%	2	13%	9	56%	16
Doctorate	0	0%	0	0%	2	67%	1	33%	3
	Totals								
	2003		Applied		Not yet		Not int		Total
Less than high school	1	33%	0	0%	1	33%	1	33%	3
High school graduate	10	34%	2	7%	11	38%	6	21%	29
Some college	26	36%	6	8%	28	39%	12	17%	72
4-year degree	27	26%	8	8%	32	31%	36	35%	103
Professional degree	33	26%	14	11%	33	26%	49	38%	129
Doctorate	3	20%	0	0%	8	53%	4	27%	15

I also looked for significant differences in levels of education between partners; see Table 5-11: Difference in education level by group. While respondents and their partners are well educated overall, there are differences among respondents and their partners. For purposes of determining partners' education levels relative to one another, each category of education from the prior section is considered a level. Thus, for example, if one partner has a 4-year degree and the other has less than a high school education, there would be a difference of three levels. Of those with no difference in partners' education levels, respondents are fairly evenly split between those who have applied (43), those who have not yet done so (34), and those who are not interested (39), with the vast majority of those who have applied obtaining citizenship in the post-2003 era (35). Looking at couples with significant differences in education level, however, tells a different story.

Of the 33 respondents with a difference of three or more levels of education to their partner, almost one-third of those who have applied marriage-based naturalization (five of 16) are still waiting for a decision. This may be an indication of bureaucratic discretion slowing the application process as officials may choose to require additional documentation or investigate such couples more closely, questioning the validity of the marriage when such differences are present.

Table 5-11: Difference in education level by group									
	Female respondent								
	2003+		Applied		Not yet applied		Not interested		Total
No difference	33	32%	8	8%	30	29%	33	32%	104
1 level	27	23%	10	9%	43	37%	35	30%	115
2 levels	17	31%	5	9%	22	40%	11	20%	55
3 levels	7	37%	2	11%	4	21%	6	32%	19
4+ levels	3	25%	3	25%	1	8%	5	42%	12
	Male respondent								
	2003+		Applied		Not yet applied		Not interested		Total
No difference	2	17%	0	0%	4	33%	6	50%	12
1 level	6	29%	1	5%	8	38%	6	29%	21
2 levels	4	36%	1	9%	1	9%	5	45%	11
3 levels	1	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1
4+ levels	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Totals								
	2003+		Applied		Not yet applied		Not interested		Total
No difference	35	30%	8	7%	34	29%	39	34%	116
1 level	33	24%	11	8%	51	38%	41	30%	136
2 levels	21	32%	6	9%	23	35%	16	24%	66
3 levels	8	40%	2	10%	4	20%	6	30%	20
4+ levels	3	23%	3	23%	1	8%	6	46%	13

While only 14 survey respondents actually originated from Russia, many others might be considered “Russian.” This is because popular perceptions often group those from the Russian Federation, the former U.S.S.R. and Eastern Europe together as “Russian.” Overall, there were 14 respondents from Russia and a total of 98 “Russians,” illustrated in Figure 5-9: “Russian” respondents. **Error! Reference source not found.** After eliminating those who applied for marriage-based naturalization prior to 2003, I examine the naturalization status of the remaining respondents. As Table 5-12: “Russian” respondents by group highlights, few of these respondents naturalized prior to 2003. Of those from the former U.S.S.R. (presumably not of “Turkish heritage”), five of sixteen “applicants”—almost one-third—are still waiting for a decision on their applications. Similarly, six of 17 “applicants” (35%) from Eastern Europe are still waiting on a decision, both of which may indicate increased bureaucratic scrutiny leading to a longer wait. To verify this finding, I then checked for other potential explanations. Due to overlap between the categories of U.S.S.R. and Eastern Europe, there are a total of seven unique “applicants.” These individuals are of different economic statuses, with two having a monthly income of \$4000 or less, one a monthly income of \$4001-7000, three an income of \$7001-10,000, and one a monthly income of \$10,001-20000. Income is clearly not a factor in the delay for these “applicants.” All of these individuals are also well-educated; all have at least a 4-year degree. Only two have significant age differences with their partners and only one has a significant difference in level of education between “applicant” and spouse. Thus, origin seems the most likely explanation for these delayed “applicants.” Additionally, origin appears to have another impact: those from Eastern Europe appear less likely to be interested in pursuing naturalization, with 14 (32%) indicating such.

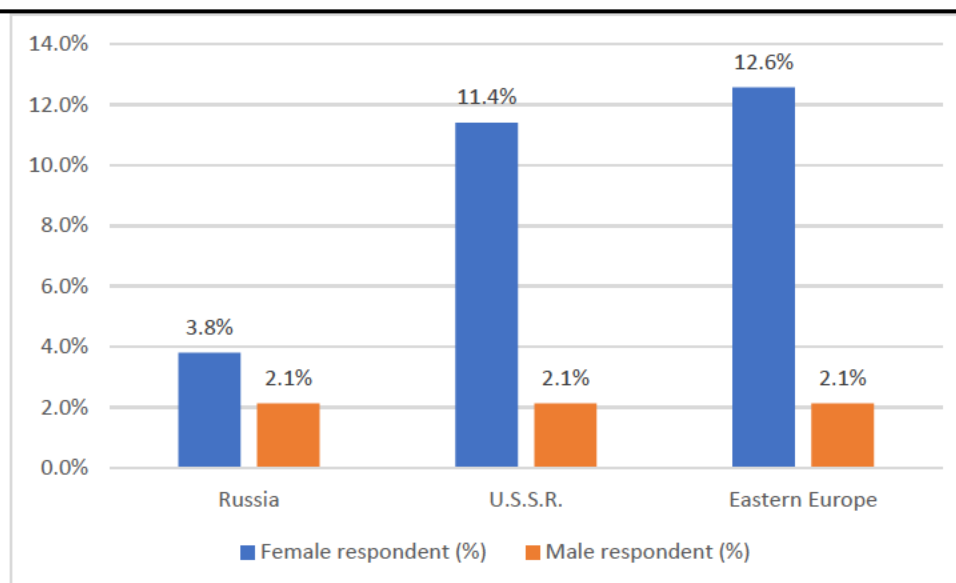


Figure 5-9: "Russian" respondents

Table 5-12: "Russian" respondents by group									
	Female respondent								
	2003+		Applied		Not yet applied		Not interested		Total
Russia	5	38%	1	8%	5	38%	2	15%	13
Former U.S.S.R.	11	29%	5	13%	15	39%	7	18%	38
Eastern Europe	11	26%	6	14%	13	30%	13	30%	43
	Male respondent								
	2003+		Applied		Not yet applied		Not interested		Total
Russia	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%	1
Former U.S.S.R.	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%	1
Eastern Europe	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Totals								
	2003+		Applied		Not yet applied		Not interested		Total
Russia	5	36%	1	7%	5	36%	3	21%	14
Former U.S.S.R.	11	28%	5	13%	15	38%	8	21%	39
Eastern Europe	11	25%	6	14%	13	30%	14	32%	44

It is important to note, however, that the “Russian” population is by no means monolithic. Significant percentages of “Russians” have either not yet applied or are not interested in applying. This may be due to a number of factors, including difficulties in retaining the home passport, political or economic conditions, perceptions of passport utility, and so forth. I will return to the question of who is *not* interested in naturalizing in Turkey in Section

5.4.2 Remaining a “resident”: Factors influencing the decision not to naturalize.

Factors related to the Turkish national identity: Integration markers and ethno-religious background

Given Turkey’s historical emphasis on the necessity of Turkish heritage and current focus on integration, it is plausible that applicant’s perceived level of integration or identification with the Turkish national identity could impact survey respondents’ naturalization status, both in regard to the decision to seek naturalization as well as the ease of the process. Also in relation to the issue of the national identity, because specific ethno-religious characteristics are an integral part of the Turkish identity, I consider it possible that the historically problematized identity characteristics of religion and ethnicity could affect applicants’ naturalization status.

After eliminating respondents who naturalized prior to 2003 from consideration, I analyze how applicant’s level of integration might be related to naturalization. I use responses to two questions as proxies for respondent level of integration with Turkish society: amount of time respondent has lived in Turkey and Turkish language skill level.²⁶ As expected, few respondents who have lived in Turkey for less than one year have applied for citizenship; see Table 5-13: Time in Turkey by group. Of the 23 respondents who have lived in Turkey for less than one year, only seven indicated they have no interest in applying while 11 have not yet applied, about half of which were not yet eligible to apply for citizenship as they had not been married for long enough.

²⁶ It is necessary for the applicant and Turkish spouse to be married for at least three years, but they do not necessarily have to live in Turkey during that time. Nor are marriage-based naturalization applicants required to speak Turkish. See Chapters 5-8 for a discussion of applicant requirements for each time period under consideration.

Conversely, respondents who have lived in Turkey for longer are more likely to be interested in and/or apply for citizenship. For example, of those who have lived in Turkey for 10 years or more (104), 55 (53%) have applied for citizenship. At the same time, however, of the 71 “applicants” who have lived in Turkey for less than 10 years, 27 (38%) are still waiting for a determination on their applications. These two trends may be interpreted in multiple ways. First, individuals who remain in a country for longer periods of time are simply more likely to seek citizenship, for practical reasons if nothing else. At the same time, those who are unhappy with the situation in a country, and have the ability to do so, may leave, adding strong elements of self-selection into the relationship between time of residence and citizenship. With that said, however, the high percentage of “applicants” who are still waiting for a determination could indicate bureaucratic discretion at work, with officials choosing to require additional documentation or conduct additional investigate these applicants because of integration concerns.

Table 5-13: Time in Turkey by group									
	Female respondent								
	2003+		Applied		Not yet applied		Not interested		Total
Less than 1 year	4	21%	1	5%	9	47%	5	26%	19
1-3 years	1	2%	2	5%	21	51%	17	41%	41
3-5 years	5	9%	9	17%	21	39%	19	35%	54
5-10 years	29	28%	14	13%	26	25%	36	34%	105
10-20 years	37	56%	1	2%	18	27%	10	15%	66
20+ years	10	53%	1	5%	5	26%	3	16%	19
No response	1	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1
	Male respondent								
	2003+		Applied		Not yet applied		Not interested		Total
Less than 1 year	0	0%	0	0%	2	50%	2	50%	4
1-3 years	0	0%	0	0%	4	57%	3	43%	7
3-5 years	1	20%	0	0%	0	0%	4	80%	5
5-10 years	4	36%	1	9%	2	18%	4	36%	11

Table 5-13: Time in Turkey by group									
10-20 years	7	44%	1	6%	4	25%	4	25%	16
20+ years	1	33%	0	0%	1	33%	1	33%	3
No response	0	---	0	---	0	---	0	---	0
	Totals								
	2003+		Applied		Not yet applied		Not interested		Total
Less than 1 year	4	17%	1	4%	11	48%	7	30%	23
1-3 years	1	2%	2	4%	25	52%	20	42%	48
3-5 years	6	10%	9	15%	21	36%	23	39%	59
5-10 years	33	28%	15	13%	28	24%	40	34%	116
10-20 years	44	54%	2	2%	22	27%	14	17%	82
20+ years	11	50%	1	5%	6	27%	4	18%	22
No response	1	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1

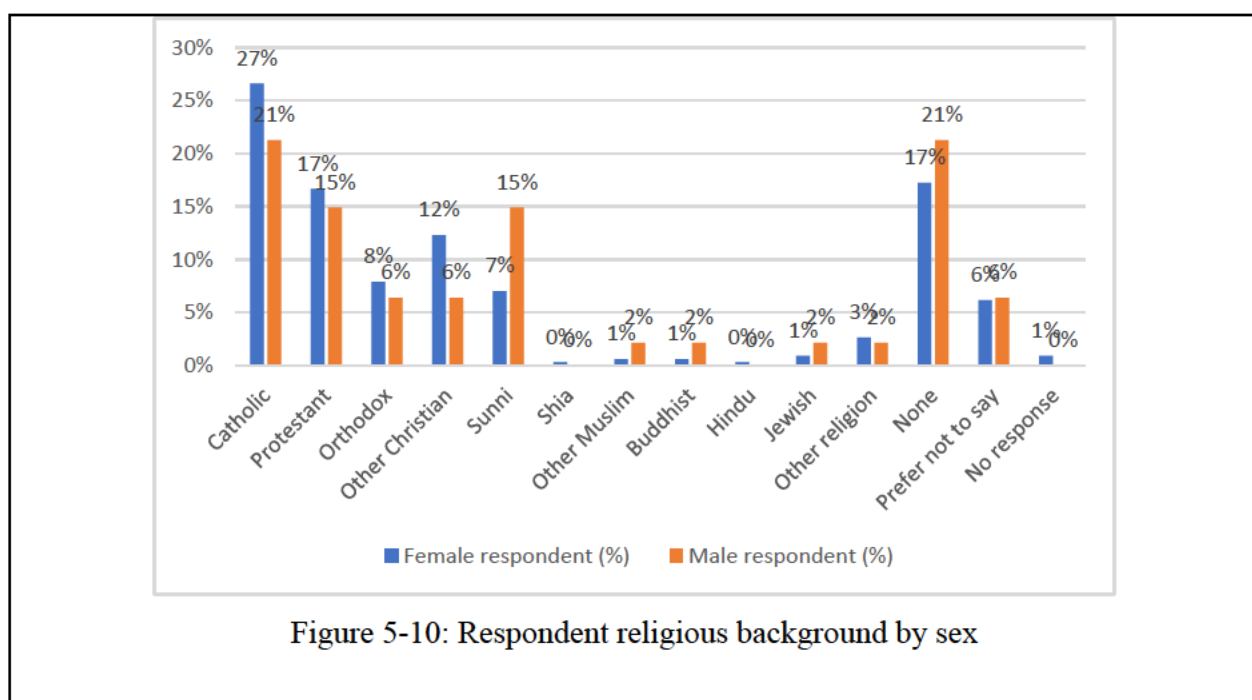
When it comes to Turkish language skill, most survey respondents considered themselves at an advanced or fluent level; see Table 5-14: Turkish language skill by group. Those who had lower levels of Turkish language skill have generally not applied for citizenship. Of 48 respondents who indicated they either do not speak Turkish or can only manage simple conversations, 24 have not yet applied and 19 have no interest in doing so. This could indicate the possibility of self-selection with regard to applying for naturalization, with applicants believing that language fluency is important for marriage-based applicants, making those with lower levels of skill less likely to apply. This could also indicate that a lower level of Turkish language skills is the result of a lack of interest in Turkish citizenship or lack of desire to remain in Turkey. Of the five “applicants” with lower levels of Turkish language skill, two are still waiting for a determination on their applications. Of the 78 “applicants” who consider themselves fluent in Turkish, 21 (26%) are still waiting. This indicates that officials may consider language fluency important for marriage-based naturalization applicants, but not to the exclusion of other factors.

Table 5-14: Turkish language skill by group									
	Female respondent								
	2003+		Applied		Not yet applied		Not interested		Total
None	0	0%	0	0%	1	33%	2	67%	3
Simple conversation	2	6%	2	6%	16	48%	13	39%	33
Intermediate	5	31%	0	0%	5	31%	6	38%	16
Advanced	28	29%	6	6%	35	36%	29	30%	98
Fluent	52	34%	20	13%	43	28%	40	26%	155
	Male respondent								
	2003+		Applied		Not yet applied		Not interested		Total
None	0	---	0	---	0	---	0	---	0
Simple conversation	1	8%	0	0%	7	58%	4	33%	12
Intermediate	1	33%	1	33%	0	0%	1	33%	3
Advanced	6	50%	0	0%	1	8%	5	42%	12
Fluent	5	26%	1	5%	5	26%	8	42%	19
	Totals								
	2003+		Applied		Not yet applied		Not interested		Total
None	0	0%	0	0%	1	33%	2	67%	3
Simple conversation	3	7%	2	4%	23	51%	17	38%	45
Intermediate	6	32%	1	5%	5	26%	7	37%	19
Advanced	34	31%	6	5%	36	33%	34	31%	110
Fluent	57	33%	21	12%	48	28%	48	28%	174

Taken together, the two characteristics used as proxies for respondents' level of integration—residence and language skill—seem to demonstrate a slight preference for applicants demonstrating integration (longer residence in Turkey and higher language skill). I then turn to religious and ethnic characteristics, which remain strong components of the Turkish national identity (see discussion on the ongoing importance of the ethno-religious identity in Turkey in

CHAPTER 4. A BRIEF EXPLORATION OF THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF CITIZENSHIP AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN TURKEY).

The Turkish identity is a Sunni one; I therefore I inquired about respondents' religious backgrounds as potentially related to citizenship aspirations and/or experiences. As illustrated in Figure 5-10: Respondent religious background by sex, the largest percentage of women indicated they are Catholic (27%), followed by Protestant (17%), and no religious background (17%). The largest percentage of male respondents are Catholic (21%) or of no religious background (21%). Interestingly, less than 10% of respondents (35) were of a Muslim background, the largest number of whom (31) were Sunni.



Eliminating those who naturalized prior to 2003 yields interesting insights into possible effects of religious background on the naturalization process; see Table 5-15: Religious background by group. Catholic respondents are somewhat split between the groups, with slightly more (35, 38%) having applied, 29 (32%) not having applied yet, and 28 (30%) not interested in

applying. Protestant respondents, on the other hand, show less interest in applying, with only 12 of 53 having applied (22%), 20 (38%) not having applied yet, and 21 (40%) not interested in obtaining Turkish citizenship. Of four Jewish respondents, three have not yet applied for Turkish citizenship and one is not interested in obtaining it. The survey data further indicate that five of 14 (36%) Orthodox applicants, five of 15 (33%) “other Christian” applicants, and six of 10 Sunni applicants (60%) are still waiting for a determination on their naturalization applications.²⁷

Table 5-15: Religious background by group									
	Female respondent								
	2003+		Applied		Not yet applied		Not interested		Total
Catholic	26	32%	6	7%	27	33%	23	28%	82
Protestant	7	15%	2	4%	19	40%	19	40%	47
Orthodox	9	33%	5	19%	8	30%	5	19%	27
Other Christian	10	28%	5	14%	14	39%	7	19%	36
Sunni	3	13%	5	22%	9	39%	6	26%	23
Shia	1	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1
Other Muslim	2	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2
Buddhist	0	0%	0	0%	1	50%	1	50%	2
Hindu	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%	1
Jewish	0	0%	0	0%	3	100%	0	0%	3
Other religion	2	22%	1	11%	4	44%	2	22%	9
None	18	36%	1	2%	12	24%	19	38%	50
Prefer not to say	8	40%	3	15%	3	15%	6	30%	20
No response	1	50%	0	0%	0	0%	1	50%	2

²⁷ Because the last finding was rather surprising, I investigated more closely. The five female applicants are from Algeria, Bulgaria, the U.K., Latvia, and Hong Kong. The sole male is from Germany and applied for naturalization in 2016. One woman applied for citizenship in 2018, the other four in 2019. By comparison, of the 14 total survey respondents who applied in 2019, only four have obtained citizenship. The best explanation for this seeming anomaly is the recent nature of most of the Sunni applications.

Table 5-15: Religious background by group									
	Male respondent								
	2003+		Applied		Not yet applied		Not interested		Total
Catholic	3	30%	0	0%	2	20%	5	50%	10
Protestant	2	33%	1	17%	1	17%	2	33%	6
Orthodox	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	3	100%	3
Other Christian	0	0%	0	0%	3	100%	0	0%	3
Sunni	1	14%	1	14%	2	29%	3	43%	7
Shia	0	---	0	---	0	---	0	---	0
Other Muslim	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%	0	0%	1
Buddhist	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%	0	0%	1
Hindu	0	---	0	---	0	---	0	---	0
Jewish	0	0%	0	0%	0	0	1	100%	1
Other religion	1	100%	0	0%	0	0	0	0%	1
None	4	40%	0	0%	3	30%	3	30%	10
Prefer not to say	2	67%	0	0%	0	0	1	33%	3
No response	0	---	0	---	0	---	0	---	0
	Totals								
	2003+		Applied		Not yet applied		Not interested		Total
Catholic	29	32%	6	7%	29	32%	28	30%	92
Protestant	9	17%	3	6%	20	38%	21	40%	53
Orthodox	9	30%	5	17%	8	27%	8	27%	30
Other Christian	10	26%	5	13%	17	44%	7	18%	39
Sunni	4	13%	6	20%	11	37%	9	30%	30
Shia	1	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1
Other Muslim	2	67%	0	0%	1	33%	0	0%	3
Buddhist	0	0%	0	0%	2	67%	1	33%	3
Hindu	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%	1
Jewish	0	0%	0	0%	3	75%	1	25%	4
Other religion	3	30%	1	10%	4	40%	2	20%	10

Table 5-15: Religious background by group									
None	22	37%	1	2%	15	25%	22	37%	60
Prefer not to say	10	43%	3	13%	3	13%	7	30%	23
No response	1	50%	0	0%	0	0%	1	50%	2

Because of Turkey's Sunni identity, I expected that Muslim applicants who were not Sunni might not be as interested in obtaining Turkish citizenship. This does not appear to be the case as three of four non-Sunni, Muslim respondents indicated they obtained Turkish citizenship through marriage after 2003. Because of the strong religious component of the Turkish identity, I also considered the role of religion itself in the desire to naturalize. Being of no religious background appears to have an effect on the decision to seek Turkish citizenship but not necessarily on the success of the application. A total of 60 respondents indicated they were of no religious background, with equal numbers having received citizenship as having no interest in obtaining it (22, 36%). Of those who have applied, 22 of 23 were successful. The remaining 16 respondents might potentially be interested in Turkish citizenship but have not yet applied.

The other large component of the Turkish identity is ethnicity. In particular, the Kurdish ethnicity has consistently been problematized. I therefore hypothesize that someone of a Kurdish background, or married to someone of a Kurdish background, might face particular hurdles in the naturalization process. On the other hand, someone of Turkish ethnicity might face fewer difficulties in naturalizing through marriage, if not applying through their heritage, as they may be assumed to be "Turkish" nearly by default. For both these respondent groups, language skill was used as a proxy characteristic—those who have some level of Kurdish language skill and those who indicated Turkish is their mother tongue, respectively. Three out of five Kurdish-linked respondents are uninterested in obtaining Turkish citizenship, while three of four Turkish-speaking respondents have applied (two-thirds of them successfully); see Table 5-16: Ethnic group. There appears to be a significant level of self-selection related to naturalization for respondents with these characteristics, indicating that ethnicity does have an effect on naturalization status.

Table 5-16: Ethnic group									
	Female respondent								
	2003+		Applied		Not yet applied		Not interested		Total
Kurdish	0	0%	1	20%	1	20%	3	60%	5
Turkish	1	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1
	Male respondent								
	2003+		Applied		Not yet applied		Not interested		Total
Kurdish	0	---	0	---	0	---	0	---	0
Turkish	1	33%	1	33%	1	33%	0	0%	3
	Totals								
	2003+		Applied		Not yet applied		Not interested		Total
Kurdish	0	0%	1	20%	1	20%	3	60%	5
Turkish	2	50%	1	25%	1	25%	0	0%	4

5.4.2 Remaining a “resident”: Factors influencing the decision not to naturalize

While I focus on naturalization throughout this paper, it is worth taking a moment to examine who chooses not to naturalize and why. The 108 (90 women and 18 men) online survey respondents who indicated they were not interested in obtaining Turkish citizenship were asked about their reasons; see Figure 5-11: Why some survey respondents do not want Turkish citizenship. Interestingly, the primary reason respondents—both women (57%) and men (67%)—list as to why they are not interested in obtaining Turkish citizenship is that they feel it is “not worth it.” This is followed by reasons related to Turkish politics (43% women; 38% men) and the Turkish economy (30% women; 27% men). Respondents who listed “other” reasons primarily noted practical issues (e.g., citizenship would complicate or jeopardize their finances or work situation) or concerns about their rights. With a higher percentage of men not being interested in obtaining Turkish citizenship, I thought perhaps they were concerned about the required period of military service. Instead, only two respondents indicated this was the case. Finally, only one respondent indicated it was a matter of identity, writing, “I am German and that is it.”

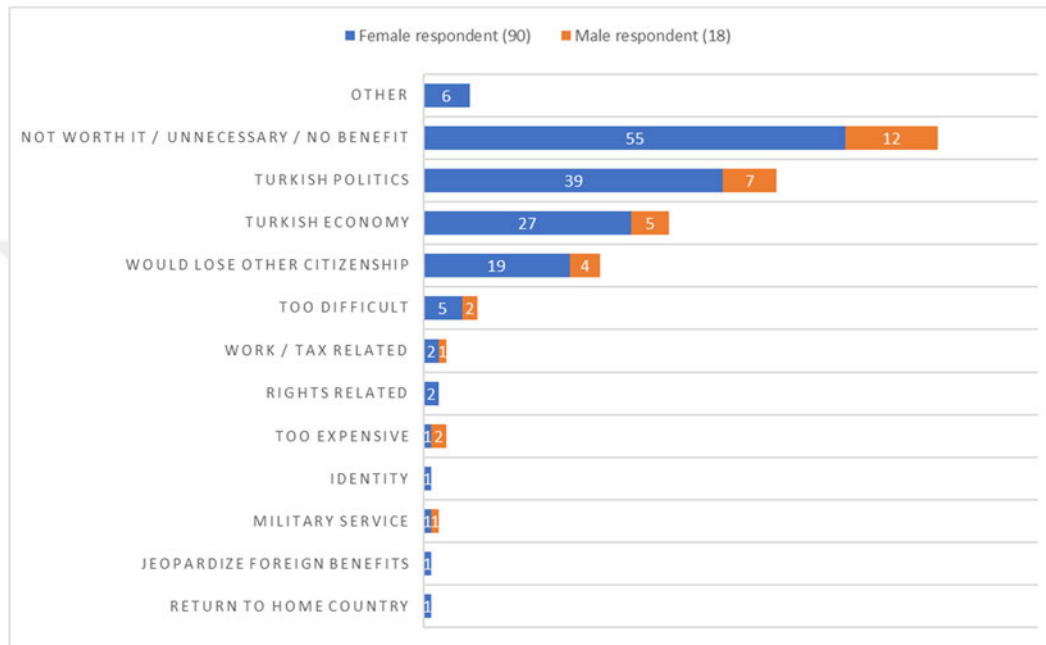


Figure 5-11: Why some survey respondents do not want Turkish citizenship

What is the value of citizenship? Dronkers and Vink (2012), Money et al. (2023), and Yang (1994), among others, have found that immigrants, particularly men, are generally less likely to naturalize when the citizenship of the host state does not convey an advantage over the citizenship of the home state in terms of social status, mobility, or economic advantages. This applies even when dual citizenship is available. One result is that those from wealthier countries are less likely to naturalize than those from comparatively less wealthy or less developed countries. This could partly explain why some respondents would prefer to remain living in Turkey on a residence permit rather than apply for naturalization, as many survey respondents are from countries such as the U.K., U.S.A., Germany, and Denmark. Country of origin does not tell the full story, however; respondents from less wealthy countries (e.g., Ghana, Lebanon, Kazakhstan), have declared they do not intend to naturalize while other respondents from these wealthier countries have already applied for or are interested in applying for Turkish citizenship.

As highlighted by the previous sections, those choosing not to naturalize tend to be in the higher income levels, well-educated, and born in 1980 or after. It is possible that such relatively well-situated individuals face less economic pressure to naturalize, feeling that their lack of Turkish citizenship imparts no economic or social disadvantage. There may be other factors outweighing any potential disadvantage not naturalizing brings as well. Many survey respondents indicated that reasons related to Turkish politics were part of their decision-making, occasionally providing additional comments. One survey respondent wrote, “for the field of work I’m interested in, being a Turkish citizen is limiting and can pose a threat to my rights.” Another said, “I don’t want Turkish laws and punishments to be applied to me. I don’t trust the government nor the legal system. It is unfair and repressive.” Clearly, at least some respondents believe being fully treated as a Turkish citizen has the potential for significant drawbacks. Interviewees who had naturalized also provided additional perspective; many ensured their children would carry both the foreign citizenship along with the Turkish citizenship—if their children even had Turkish citizenship at all. Several women I interviewed indicated their children did not have Turkish citizenship. When asked, they talked about the military service requirement, the advantage for their children vis-à-vis the Turkish education system in remaining foreign citizens, wanting to ensure their children had a choice in their citizenship, and the potential for international mobility. It is possible that those who are not interesting in naturalizing are concerned about the current Turkish context itself; see discussion in section 4.6 The 2000s: E.U. accession, minority rights, and immigration (unsuccessfully) challenge the ethno-religious Turkish identity. Due to a variety of concerns, these respondents are choosing to continue living in Turkey on a residence permit, with all the attendant precarities of doing so. Overall, however, it is clear that those who are choosing not to naturalize are indicating that the exchange—the economic, mobility, or social benefits in return for the obligations of citizenship—is not sufficiently weighted in favor of naturalization.

5.5 *Conclusion*

Implicitly or explicitly, the international marriage research nexus often reinforces the primacy of South-North migration. In positioning Turkey as a destination state for international marriage migration, my research shifts the focus to South-South and even North-South migration. It is therefore relevant to consider whether findings from Western states and/or Asia are applicable to

the Turkish context. Certain gendered and ethnicized patterns appear similar in Turkey as elsewhere, including the dominance of women in marriage-based naturalization, the importance of income level, and concerns or proxy indicators used in determining the validity of applicants' marriages. When it comes to issues related to the national identity, however, there were fewer similarities. In the West, disparate experiences and outcomes in naturalization have been linked with racism and Islamophobia resulting from official policy and/or bureaucratic discretion (Alexander, 2013; Chowdhury, 2018; de Hart, 2015b; Kofman et al., 2015; Leutloff-Grandits, 2019; Mouritsen, 2013; Saulnier, 2015; Topak et al., 2015). In the context of Turkey, I sought to examine indicators associated with problematic "others," including religious background, atheism, and minority group membership (Hurriyet Daily News, 2017).²⁸ Jewish, Protestant, and Kurdish-linked online survey respondents were less interested in pursuing naturalization in Turkey, which may be another indication of the continued significance of ethnic and religious affiliation—the ethno-religious Turkish identity—in the government and public imagination.

This research first situated survey respondents within the larger environment of Turkey, finding that while respondents may not be fully representative of the population of interest (i.e., those potentially eligible to apply for citizenship through marriage), they do provide an interesting cross-section of successful and not-yet-successful applicants, potential applicants, and non-applicants, providing information on who is (not) interested in naturalizing as well as who tends to be more successful during the application process (i.e., the application process taking less time). Moreover, given the nature of the survey, respondents who naturalized did so at various times, allowing for simple comparisons between groups. With regard to specific demographic factors potentially influencing the naturalization process, this survey data found that respondents with significant differences between partners in age or level of education, who have very high (or low) levels of income or education, are from Eastern Europe, of specific religious backgrounds, or were Kurdish-affiliated were less interested in naturalization. When applying for citizenship,

²⁸ While the *Hurriyet* article focuses on Turkish youth, these are widespread opinions about who constitutes a problematic "other." According to World Values Survey Wave 7, 41.2% of Turks would not like to have a person of a different race as a neighbor, 48.1% would not like to have an immigrant or foreign worker, and 41.4% would not want to have someone of a different religion (Haerpfer et al., 2022).

respondents with significant differences between partners in age or level of education, who have very high (or low) levels of income or education, are “Russian,” or are of specific religious or ethnic backgrounds experienced disparities in navigating the naturalization process, as evidenced by the higher percentages of such respondents reporting that they are still waiting for a determination on their application. Survey respondents who indicated they are not interested in naturalizing provided a variety of reasons that informed their decision-making. While some may not be pursuing Turkish citizenship due to their problematized identity characteristics, many believe naturalization as “not worth it,” often citing concerns with Turkish politics as well as more pragmatic concerns. In the next several chapters, I examine applicants’ lived experiences with the application process to try to understand how various identity characteristics impact the application process once the decision has been made to seek naturalization.

CHAPTER 6. THE ROLE OF BUREAUCRATIC DISCRETION IN “OBJECTIVE” NATURALIZATION DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

6.1 *Introduction*

When applying for naturalization, applicants must first meet any residency or waiting period requirements. After this requirement is met, applicants must next submit their application documents. The documents required to accompany the application, however, have significantly changed. Prior to 2003, a simple declaration of intent was sufficient to obtain citizenship through marriage. In 2003-2004, two additional documents became necessary: a copy of the family population registration and applicant's passport. In 2009-2010, the official list of required documents expanded to include an official application form, applicant's passport, birth certificate, and residence permit.

This initial step in the application process, applicants' first encounter with the citizenship bureaucracy, also marks the first generalized instance of bureaucratic discretion in action. While the documentation requirements changed with Law No. 4866 (2003) and Law No. 5901 (2009)—and their implementing regulations—this chapter highlights the consistent inconsistency of their implementation. In this chapter, I draw on data provided by 168 respondents to the online survey who have obtained Turkish citizenship through marriage. I also utilize data obtained from interviews with 25 immigrants married to Turkish spouses, both with and without Turkish citizenship, as well as 10 attorneys or consultants who work with them; see Table E-1: Immigrant interviewees and Table E-2: Attorney/consultant interviewees in Appendix E. I compare the documentation requirements reported by survey respondents and interviewees' (or their clients') experiences to those described within application documents and implementing regulations. This chapter is divided into sections according to the time period under consideration—pre-2003, 2003-2009, and 2010-2019; see Table 6-1: Survey respondents and interviewees by application period for a breakdown of survey respondents and interviewees by naturalization time period.

Table 6-1: Survey respondents and interviewees by application period				
	Survey respondents		Interviewees	
Application period	Women	Men	Women	Men
<2003	37	1	6	0
2003 – 2009	15	3	5	0
2010 – 2019	102	10	13	1
Totals	168 ²⁹		25 ³⁰	

6.2 Documentation requirements prior to 2003

Survey respondents who naturalized before 2003 generally reported an easy process as the sole *de jure* conditions were marriage to a Turkish citizen and declaring one's intent to acquire Turkish citizenship; see Table 6-4: Application requirements prior to 2003.³¹ Where and how this declaration was made depended on who conducted the wedding ceremony. Article 42, Law No. 403 (1964) states that if the ceremony is performed by Turkish authorities, the declaration is submitted at the wedding. If the marriage is conducted by duly authorized foreign authorities, the applicant has one month to submit a written declaration, along with the marriage registration, to the appropriate office.

²⁹ Of the 168 survey respondents who have applied for citizenship, 138 were successful and 30 are still waiting for a decision on their applications.

³⁰ Of the 25 interviewees, 17 have received Turkish citizenship, the applications of six are still under review, and the applications of two were denied.

³¹ Law No. 403, Türk Vatandaşlığı Kanunu [Turkish Citizenship Law] (1964). Available from <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/>

Table 6-2: Application requirements prior to 2003	
Statute	Article I § 3, Law No. 403, Türk Vatandaşlığı Kanunu [Turkish Citizenship Law] (1964) ³²
Enacted	February 11, 1964
Application prerequisites	Marry a Turkish citizen
Application documents	A declaration of intent to obtain Turkish citizenship
Application submitted to	If the ceremony is conducted in front of Turkish authorities, the declaration is submitted to that office and forwarded to the relevant population office. If the ceremony is conducted in front of authorized foreign officials, the declaration should be submitted in writing within a month of the ceremony and sent with the marriage registration

While ostensibly only requiring a declaration of intent, citizenship through marriage was not always automatic, and the 38 survey respondents from this period reported a variety of documentation requirements. Only one person recalled needing to submit a declaration of intent, though more than 80% (32 respondents) had to provide their marriage certificate. At the same time, others were required to submit proof of residence (4, 11%), written proof of Turkish language skill (4, 11%), or a health report (3, 8%); see Table E-3: Survey respondent documents by application period. While the majority of survey respondents who naturalized prior to 2003 indicated their naturalization application process took less than six months, two respondents indicated their process took between six months, and a year, and three respondents indicated their process took more than two years; see Figure 6-1: Survey respondent application processing time by year

³² While there were several amendments to Law No. 403 prior to 2003 resulting in changes to the referenced article and section number, none impacted the text governing the acquisition of Turkish citizenship through marriage.

(through 2009).³³ With that said, however, neither the additional documentation requirements nor the longer processing time appear to be targeted toward a particular demographic of survey respondents. This could indicate officials' individual use of discretion rather than targeted campaigns spurred on by growing politicization of marriage-based citizenship. However, given that none of the 38 survey respondents who naturalized through marriage during this period were from Russia or Eastern Europe in general, it is certain the picture provided by the survey is incomplete.

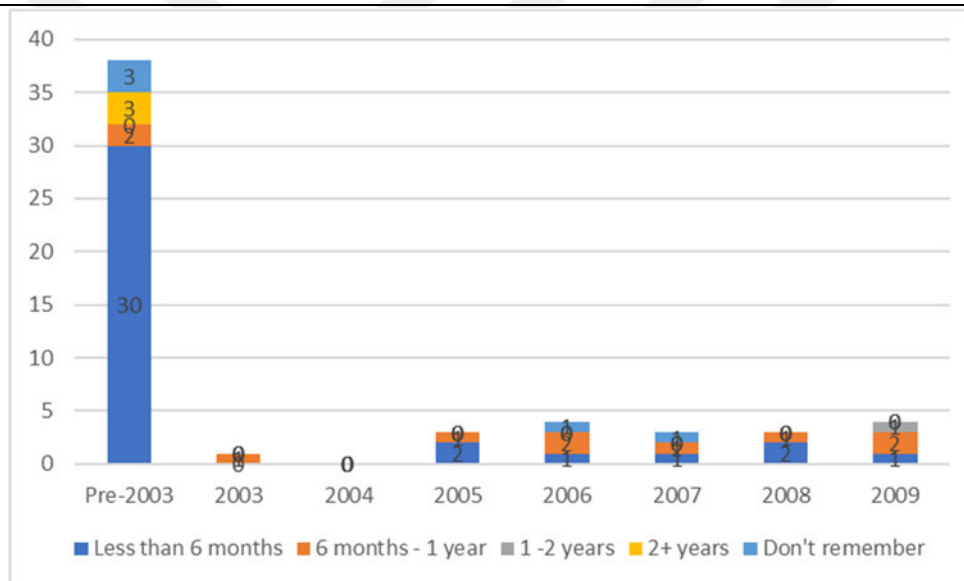


Figure 6-1: Survey respondent application processing time by year (through 2009)

For most of the six interviewees who applied for marriage-based naturalization before 2003, the process was easy, even if the implications were not always clear. “Grace,” originally from the

³³ The three respondents whose applications took more than two years are all women from the U.S.A. who indicated they had to provide various documents and undergo interviews. Unfortunately, no further information is available as to why their naturalization applications took so much longer.

U.K., married in the mid-1980s.³⁴ She remembers needing to submit a *dilekçe* (petition) before the marriage and being asked during her wedding if she would like to receive Turkish citizenship. She agreed and received Turkish citizenship the day after her marriage. “Diana,” also from the U.K., married in the late 1990s. She remembers being told that as long as she informed the government, in writing, in advance of the wedding, she would receive citizenship immediately. However, she remembers being “warned” that she might lose her rights as a U.K. citizen by obtaining Turkish citizenship. After Diana learned that Turkish citizenship only meant she would be treated as a Turkish citizen while in Turkey, she specified she wanted dual citizenship and says, “that was that” (May 29, 2019). “Olivia,” on the other hand, had no idea that dual citizenship was an option before her wedding in the early 2000s; obtaining accurate information was difficult and misinformation abounded. Olivia recalls,

I didn’t want to get it [Turkish citizenship] because I had heard that they would take my British passport away. I don’t know who I thought “they” would be, but I was very nervous about getting it. When I went with my husband—and the mayor of the village had to come with us to do the paperwork—they said that I had to have it. So, I took it, and it was just part of the process of getting married. And no one took my passport away (June 5, 2019).

While Grace, Diana, and Olivia knew they were eligible for citizenship, if not exactly sure whether they wanted it, such was not always the case. “Elizabeth” from South Africa met her husband in an online chat room; they married in the late 1990s. Elizabeth didn’t speak Turkish or understand the documents she was signing at the wedding. Her husband, who served as her translator, neglected to provide details, telling her only that she was signing the standard marriage paperwork. She was therefore rather surprised to receive notification of Turkish citizenship a few months later, though she felt welcomed by it. While “Sofia” and “Olga,” both from Russia, applied for citizenship at their weddings in 2000 and 2002, respectively, their application processes took longer than a year. As the only two interviewees from Russia who naturalized during this period, it is interesting to note that while all the interviewees had been living and working in Turkey when

³⁴ All respondent names and other identifying details have been changed to respect respondents’ privacy.

they married, Sofia and Olga were the only ones to be investigated for the possibility of a “fake marriage” or “marriage of convenience”; this will be addressed in the next chapter.³⁵

It is possible that some of the variation in documentation requirements is due to differences in who officiated applicant’s ceremony. This may explain why some respondents indicate they needed a written declaration of intent, others were simply asked at the wedding, and others had both. Variations in application processing time may be related to additional documentation requirements in some cases, though in others it appears related to the decision to conduct interviews with applicants, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Both of these possibilities are related to the exercise of bureaucratic discretion, as neither the additional documentation nor interview requirements were applied equally to all applicants.

6.3 Documentation requirements during the period 2003-2009

In 2003, Law No. 4866 was enacted, significantly amending the Turkish citizenship law and adding requirements for marriage-based citizenship applicants.³⁶ Describing the procedures to apply for citizenship, Regulation 2004/7275 was implemented the following year.³⁷ Together,

³⁵ The terms “fake marriage” and “marriage of convenience” were sometimes used interchangeably by interviewees, but at other times, there was a slight difference in how they were used. When interviewees used the term “fake marriage,” it more often described situations where either 1) the foreign spouse is engaged in prostitution and pays money to an “Uncle Hasan” (generally an older man living in a rural area) to marry her in name only so that she can continue her activities without being deported; or 2) the foreign spouse is engaged in a relationship with a married man who arranges for a third party to marry the woman in name only so that the first two can continue their relationship. A “marriage of convenience,” on the other hand, was more often used by interviewees to describe a marriage contracted for the purpose of gaining citizenship or its benefits (e.g., access to the labor market, healthcare, education, etc.), without the connotations of illegal/illicit (sexual) behavior.

³⁶ Law No. 4866, Türk Vatandaşlığı Kanununda Değişiklik Yapılmasına İlişkin Kanun [Law Amending the Turkish Citizenship Law] (2003). Available from <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/>. Notably, Law No. 4866 also allowed women who had previously lost Turkish citizenship (specifically due to marriage with a foreign national) the opportunity to regain it.

³⁷ Karar Sayısı 2004/7275 Türk vatandaşı ile evlenme nedeniyle Türk vatandaşlığının kazanılmasına ve Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti vatandaşlarının Türk vatandaşlığını kazanmalarına ilişkin yönetmelik (mülga) [Regulation

these codified the legal, procedural, and documentation requirements for all applicants, including those applying through marriage, which are laid out in Table 6-6: Application requirements 2003-2009. The primary requirements set forth in Law No. 4866 were that the applicant must be married to a Turkish citizen for at least three years to be eligible for citizenship, the marriage must be ongoing at the time of the application, and the applicant must not have engaged in activities such as prostitution or be objectionable in terms of national security, the public order, or general morality. Under Regulation 2004/7275, official documentation requirements are minimal, consisting of a copy of the family population registration and a notarized Turkish translation of applicant's passport or state issued identification.

Table 6-3: Application requirements 2003-2009	
Statute	Article I, Law No. 4866, Türk Vatandaşlığı Kanununda Değişiklik Yapılmasına İlişkin Kanun [Law Amending the Turkish Citizenship Law]. (2003) ³⁸
Enacted	June 4, 2003
Governing regulation	Regulation 2004/7275: Regulation regarding the acquisition of Turkish citizenship and the acquisition of the Turkish citizenship of the Northern Cyprus Turkish Republic due to marriage with a Turkish citizen ³⁹
Application prerequisites	• Must be married to a Turkish citizen for at least three years; and • The marriage must be ongoing at the time of application.
Application documents	• Annotated family population registration; and • Notarized Turkish translation of passport or other state issued identification.

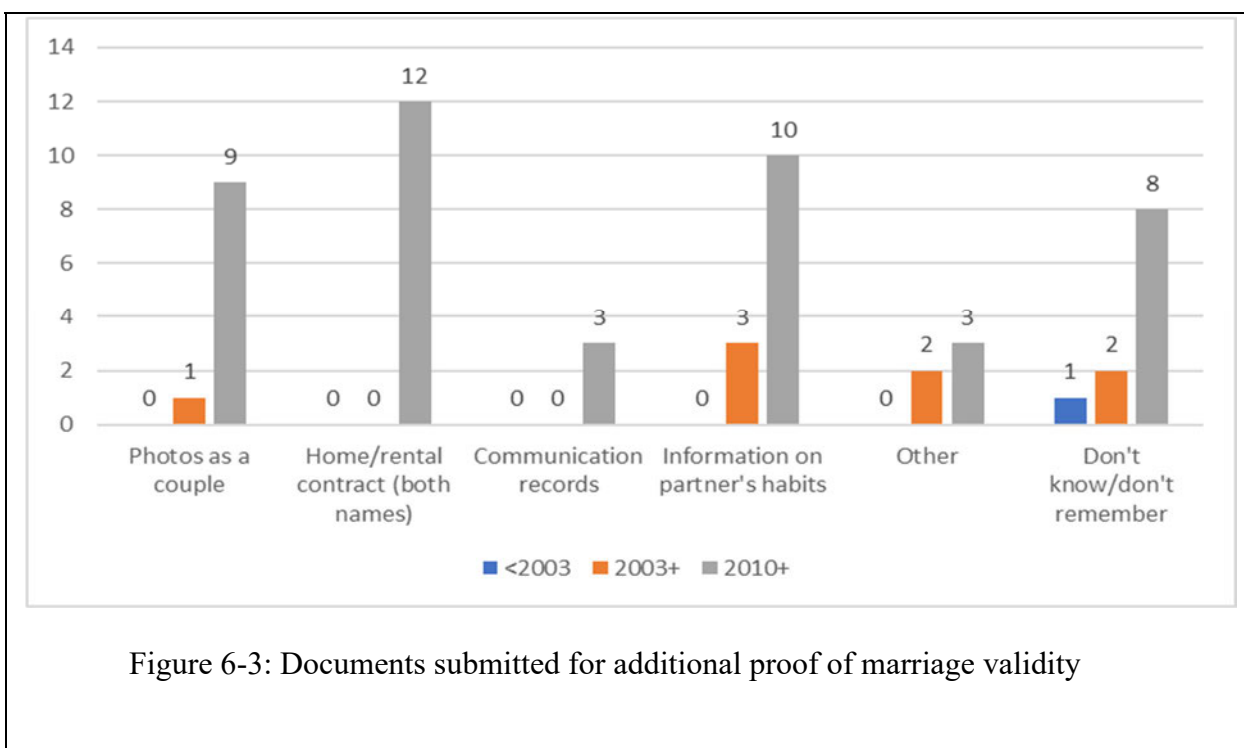
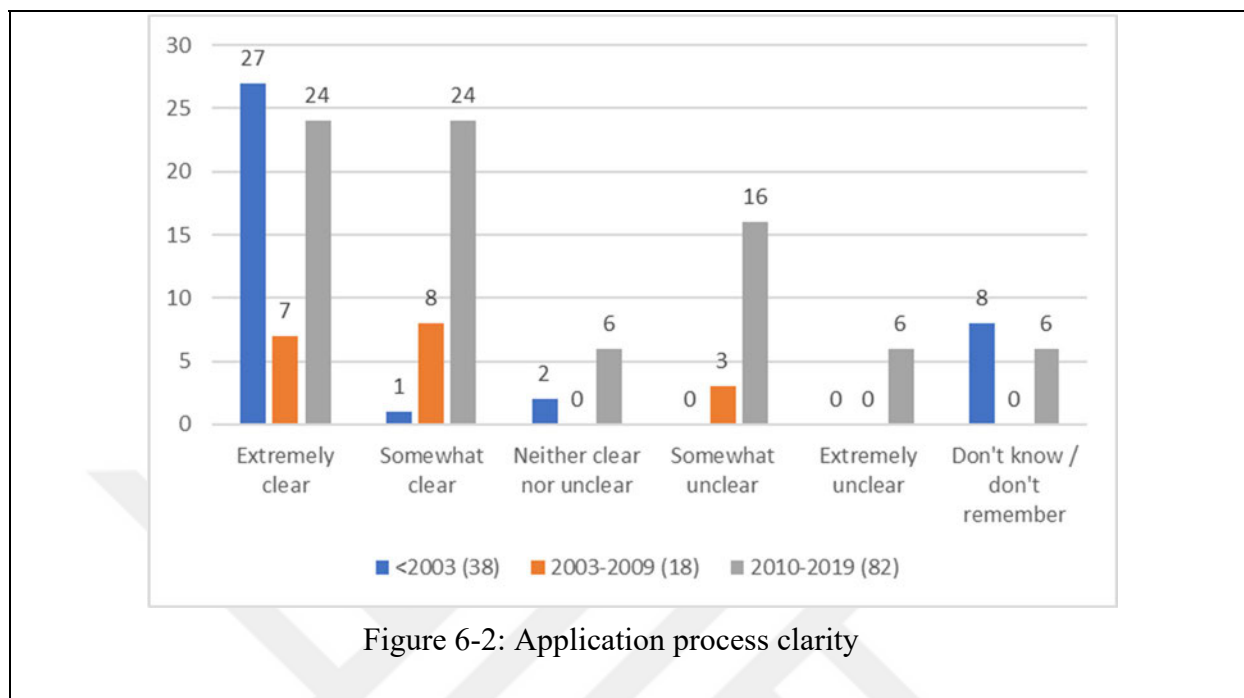
2004/7275 on the implementation of Turkish Citizenship Law due to marriage with a Turkish citizen...] (2004). Available at <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2004/05/20040524.htm#4>

³⁸ Text of Law No. 4866 (Turkish) available at <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2003/06/20030612.htm#1>

³⁹ Text of Regulation 2004/7275 (Turkish) available at <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2004/05/20040524.htm#4>

Table 6-3: Application requirements 2003-2009	
Application submitted to	Provincial governorship / highest administrative authority of residence, then forwarded to the General Directorate of Population and Citizenship Affairs.
Application processed by	General Directorate of Population and Citizenship Affairs, which determines whether applicant meets the application requirements.

Survey respondents report that marriage-based naturalization applications filed during the period 2003-2009 typically took a year or less to be processed; see Figure 6-1: Application processing time by year (through 2009). Most survey respondents indicated the process for this period was at least somewhat clear; see Figure 6-2: Application process clarity. Respondents who naturalized during this period also report being required to submit a variety of documents beyond those noted in Regulation 2004/7275, including written proof of language skill (10, 56%), and additional proof of marriage validity (7, 39%); see Table E-3: Survey respondent documents by application period. During this period, the additional proof noted by respondents included photos of the couple together, information about the Turkish partner, and other documents; see Figure 6-3: Documents submitted for additional proof of marriage validity.



Five interviewees naturalized based on marriage 2003-2009; their stories reflect a wide range of experiences, and several report a frustrating and confusing process in which they received conflicting information by people in different offices. “Kirstin” lives in Istanbul. She married her Turkish husband in the U.S.A. in the early 1990s, but they did not realize she could have acquired Turkish citizenship at that time. Instead, they waited until they moved to Turkey in 2003. As Kirstin recalls,

There wasn’t any one source of information where you could find out what the process was and what documents you needed for each step in the process. [...] It wasn’t like there was a checklist. It was a lot of going from bureaucratic office to bureaucratic office and asking. Somebody tells you something, you do the things they tell you, bring that document, and then they tell you to bring something else. Then you bring them that document and they tell you to bring yet something else (April 28, 2019).

In addition to being required to submit extra documentation, Kirstin also experienced frustration in providing notarized Turkish translations:

We had a lot of difficulty with the documents not matching one another. For example, there’s a lot of this bureaucratic stuff where one says I was born in A.B.D. [Amerika Birleşik Devletleri], and the other one says I was born in the U.S.A. They would make me go back and get them changed so that they matched one another. Or Texas. One is spelled with an “x” and one has “ks” because that is where I was born. So, I would have to keep going back and getting the documents I already had reissued, getting revisions to them. But that would always require writing a *dilekçe*, a petition, and then getting that submitted and waiting for [it] to be reviewed (April 28, 2019).⁴⁰

Kirstin was far from alone in experiencing these kinds of challenges. “Mary,” an attorney in Istanbul who focuses on foreigners in Turkey, is also a naturalized Turkish citizen due to her marriage. According to Mary, document errors (e.g., spelling mistakes, errors in names, etc.) are the most common problem affecting her clients. She also has personal experience in this area. Mary met and married her Turkish husband in the U.S.A. in the early 1990s. Afterward, while they were living in the U.S.A., Mary took her husband’s surname but used her maiden name as her middle name. When she applied for citizenship in 2009, the General Directorate of Population and Citizenship Affairs refused to accept her documentation. Mary was eventually able to get documents from the U.S. Consulate demonstrating her identity. Unfortunately, after she took these

⁴⁰ The presence and/or absence of the dot in the English letter i/I causes it not to match a Turkish spelling of a name or place that uses i/I or i/İ; the letter “x” in English spellings is generally replaced with a “ks” in Turkish spellings, causing the same issue.

documents to the Directorate, they made a further error in entering the information, giving her a completely unassociated name. She had to sue the office; her naturalization application process lasted around three years.

Interviewees often cite difficulties stemming from bureaucratic inflexibility and an apparent unwillingness to assist applicants. This attitude toward would-be citizens is part of a larger change. Beginning in 2003, there is a clear shift toward requiring additional documentation from applicants as well as applications taking longer to be processed. While some of the confusion and required documents reported by survey respondents and interviewees may be linked to the challenges of implementing any new regulation (e.g., confusion about the requirements resulting in officials requiring different documents, uneven implementation, etc.), there was also a striking shift in attitude among bureaucratic officials from pre-2003, and several respondents describe more challenging interactions with officials. While Elizabeth, who naturalized before 2003, felt welcomed by her automatic citizenship, interviewees who naturalized during this period felt much less welcomed by officials in charge of application procedures. As Kirstin recalls,

I remember one time I got frustrated and said something. ... The lady took the file folder full of papers and kind of threw them over the desk at me and said, “nobody called you up and said, ‘please come and be a Turkish citizen.’ If you want to be a Turkish citizen, then you are going to do every damn thing we tell you to do. Nobody is knocking on your door begging you to please become a Turkish citizen.” (April 28, 2019).

This changing attitude toward marriage-based applicants reflects the growing politicization of marriage-based naturalization during this period as well as underlying tensions between international and domestic pressures encouraging migration and settlement in Turkey and the official conception of the national identity. While it is not clear whether bureaucratic discretion in imposing additional requirements was part of an official policy to make gaining citizenship more difficult, it did have that result for many, as well as slowing the overall application process.

6.4 *Documentation requirements during the period 2010-2019*

In 2009, Türk Vatandaşlığı Kanunu [Turkish Citizenship Law], Law No. 5901 was enacted with the goal of harmonization with E.U. legislation as part of the accession process. However, as Kadirbeyoğlu (2010) argues, many significant changes—particularly the acceptance of dual citizenship—were as at least as much due to the demands of the Turkish diaspora, especially those

in Germany who maintained strong ties with Turkey. Alongside these major changes, Law No. 5901 (2009) changed certain requirements for marriage-based naturalization; see Table 6-7: Application requirements 2009-2019. The requirements of an ongoing marriage lasting at least three years and living with the Turkish spouse were retained, with the caveat that the applicant and spouse must be living in “family unity,” an undefined and thus subjective criteria. The specific list of activities to be avoided from 2003 was replaced with “acts not compatible with marriage unity.” Interestingly, the requirement that the applicant not be “objectionable in terms of....general morality” was dropped, though applicant still must not pose a threat to national security or the public order.

Table 6-4: Application requirements 2009-2019	
Statute	Article 16, Law No. 5901, Türk Vatandaşlığı Kanunu [Turkish Citizenship Law] (2009) ⁴¹
Enacted	May 29, 2009
Governing regulation	Regulation 2010/139: Regulation on the implementation of Turkish Citizenship Law No. 5901 (2009) ⁴²
Application prerequisites	• Must be married to a Turkish citizen for at least three years and marriage is ongoing.
Application documents	• Petition (application) form; • Identity register copy belonging to the Turkish spouse taken from the system by the application authorities;

⁴¹ Text of Law No. 5901 (Turkish) available at <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=4a9d204d2&skip=0&quer>

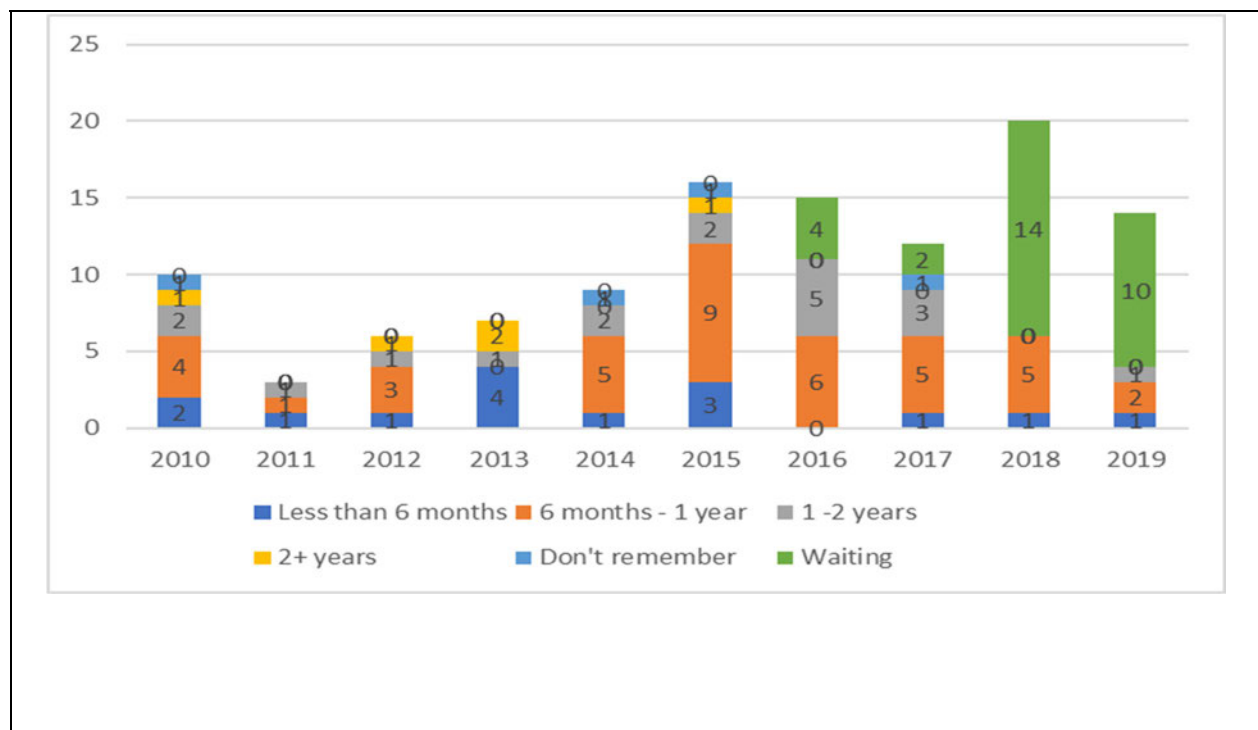
⁴² Text of Regulation 2010/139 (Turkish) available at <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2010/04/20100406-9.htm>. Requirements listed on the November 2019 application form differ slightly from the text of the regulation, omitting the identity register copy and further requiring duly approved identity and passport documentation be notarized and translated into Turkish, as well as the inclusion of 2 pcs 50x60 mm machine readable biometric photographs.

Table 6-4: Application requirements 2009-2019	
	• Passport or similar document showing the state of which the person is a citizen. If the person is stateless a document showing this situation (if available); • A document such as a birth certificate or an identity register copy showing the identity information of the person; • If the place of residence is in Turkey, the last residence permit; • If there is a final court decision about any crime, a certified copy; • If the person does not have a month and day of birth, a signed document from the competent authorities of his/her country for the completion of his date of birth and the signed declaration that he/she accepts the transaction pursuant to Article 39 of the Population Services Law numbered 5490; and • A receipt showing that the service fee has been deposited in the Revenue Department of the Treasury.
Application submitted to and processed by	Provincial Directorate of Population and Citizenship Affairs, which determines whether • the foreigner has been married to a Turkish citizen for at least three years; • the marriage has ended due to reasons such as divorce or death before the application date; • there is an ongoing criminal trial, or the applicant has been convicted or imprisoned for any crime; and • applicant has presented the documents requested in accordance with Article 26.

Law No. 5901 (2009) was implemented via Regulation 2010/139, which set forth the documentation and procedural requirements, but did not define these key terms. While the law opened up the possibility for greater bureaucratic discretion in not defining key terms within the law itself, the major changes to the marriage-based naturalization application process for this period came as a result of implementing Regulation 2010/139; the year 2010 is therefore used to

define the boundary of this category. The implementing regulation could reasonably be expected to offer guidance but does not, thereby further institutionalizing greater latitude in discretionary decision making by officials. The new documentation requirements established by Regulation 2010/139 include an official petition (application) form, passport, birth certificate or copy of the identity register, residence permit, certified copy of any final court ruling, and an application fee. Instead of the application being submitted to the provincial governorship for forwarding to the (central) General Directorate of Population and Citizenship Affairs (Nüfus ve Vatandaşlık İşleri Genel Müdürlüğü), after 2010 applications are to be submitted to the Provincial Directorate of Population and Citizenship for initial eligibility determination.

More than 100 survey respondents applied for naturalization during the period of 2010-2019. Of these, 82 provided additional information regarding their application processes. The majority of applications took between six months and one year to be processed, though a significant proportion took two years or more; see Figure 6-4: Application processing time by year (2010 - 2019). Of 82 respondents, 22 reported the naturalization application process (e.g., required documents, procedures, etc.) was either “somewhat unclear” or “extremely unclear,” with only 29% rating the process “extremely clear”; see Figure 6-2: Application process clarity.



Just as survey respondents report varying levels of process clarity, attorneys and consultants have varying understandings of the documents required as part of the naturalization application. Erkan, a consultant in Istanbul, states that—absent extraordinary circumstances—the health report is the only additional document that might be required of applicants. İlkin and Ahmet, consultants in Antalya and Ankara, respectively, emphasize that health reports are especially important for applicants from Africa, South Africa in particular, to submit with their applications. It was unclear why these immigrants would be considered a higher health risk. Moreover, respondents who naturalized during this period also report being required to submit a variety of additional documents, including written proof of language skill, health reports, housing contracts, proof of education, and communication records; see Table E-3: Survey respondent documents by application period in Appendix E.

I interviewed 14 individuals who applied for marriage-based naturalization during this period. “Ava,” originally from Germany, submitted her naturalization application in 2015 and was approved for citizenship the following year. She was not aware of this right away, however, as she was not contacted directly; officials sought to contact her attorney who had since moved abroad to study. Eventually, Ava checked the *e-Devlet* (e-Government) website and realized she needed to return to the government office to finalize the information that would appear on her identification card. She recalls,

After I left, I saw that there were some spelling mistakes on the form—my mother and father’s names were wrong. I was told I should return immediately to the *vatan*.⁴³ When I got there, the same person told me that the information had already been sent to Ankara. I didn’t want to have to sue and spend a lot more money to fix it. Thankfully, the person was able to fix it [...] and the card arrived in a few days (March 1, 2020).

Ava was fortunate in not having to submit a petition or file a lawsuit over these spelling mistakes. As Mary, an attorney and successful marriage-based naturalization applicant, made clear, it is very common for minor spelling mistakes to result in application denials, creating a need for additional petitions and lawsuits as officials are unwilling to assist in making minor corrections.

⁴³ While the direct translation of *vatan* is homeland, Ava used *vatan* and *vantandaş* (citizen) as short for the *Nüfus ve Vatandaşlık İşleri Müdürlüğü* (Directorate of Population and Citizenship Affairs).

This unwillingness may be a reflection of changing Turkish attitudes toward would-be citizens; in recent years, even those once implicitly assumed to “Turkish” by virtue of their marriage are more frequently perceived by Turks as less than welcome. Moreover, this attitude includes a lack of understanding the ways in which specific types of available documents may differ by country, even ones from which higher numbers of marriage-based applicants originate. “Melissa,” for example, is originally from the U.S.A. and lives with her Turkish husband in the Hatay province. She submitted her naturalization application in 2018, but says,

When we went there [Provincial Directorate of Population and Citizenship], it seemed like they weren’t really that familiar with the procedures for an American citizen. [...] In fact, they refused the translations of my birth certificate and my passport. [...] They said they weren’t valid, and that I needed to go back, have them retranslated and re-notarized, which of course is a large expense. It took several weeks. Then they again refused my birth certificate because it was issued by my state. Because in the United States, births and education are registered by the state, not by the federal government. So, they demanded a federally issued birth certificate, which doesn’t exist (May 30, 2019).

Melissa was eventually able to network with other would-be citizens who had encountered similar problems. She was finally able to resolve the issue with the assistance of the American Consulate in Adana, which issued a notarized letter stating the validity of the birth certificate, and the Provincial Directorate eventually accepted Melissa’s application.

Often, attitudes toward would-be citizens go beyond an unwillingness to assist or lack of understanding into outright hostility. Michelle, originally from the U.K., submitted her application for naturalization in 2017 in the province of Antalya. Her husband visited the office in Antalya to ask about the process and was told to download the application from the website. When Michelle and her husband went to the office a few days later, having filled out the application from the website, they were told it was the old form and invalid. They were initially told they needed to go home and find the correct form online (despite having used the only form available online), but the official eventually relented and provided them with a copy of the correct form and updated list of required documents. She says,

They were really, really rude. They gave us the list, and on the list, it said four photographs. I’d just had a packet of ten done, so we said “okay, fine.” [...] So, we filled all the form in and gave him the form and the documents. He looked through them all and then he said, “where are your photographs?” I said “there, in the packet.” He said, “okay. How many?” I said, “well, you said four.” He said, “I want six.” I said, “there’s six in there.” He said “*tamam.*” Then he said, “we need this document, you’ve not given us this document.” I said, “it’s not on the list.” He said, “well, I want it.” [...] So, then we went back, and they said, “okay, fine. Right, that’s everything. Wait, I want eight photographs.” I said, “there are eight photographs in there.”

“Tamam.” Then, a few minutes later, he said “I want this notarized” as well. We said, “but, earlier, you said everything else was fine.” “I changed my mind.” [It took a few hours, but Michelle returned with the notarized document] So, I said, is that everything?” He said, “that’s everything, that’s fine.” All the time, I was speaking in Turkish. I never spoke English to them. I said, “okay, okay. So, I can go back to Alanya?” “Yes, go, go. *Git, git.*” I said, “are you sure?” “*Git, git!*” So, I started to go down the stairs and then suddenly he shouts, “I need ten photos; I want ten!” I said, “there are ten in it!” And then I went. They just made everything as difficult as possible. Two of the things they insisted on having weren’t on the list. I think they just thought we didn’t have them, but I took everything. I took every form I could think of. Every form, every document, everything (September 4, 2019).

Keiser (1999), Alpes and Spire (2014) and Kristol and Dahinden (2019), among others, have all noted how the political environment affects the practices of bureaucratic officials. Thus, while it is possible to dismiss Michelle’s experience as simply due to a bureaucratic official having a bad temper and a bad day, or even—less kindly—as due to an official demonstrating his control over the applicant and application process, we should also consider how the political environment shapes the implementation of immigration and naturalization policies on an ongoing basis. Thus, as immigration and naturalization have become more politicized and anti-immigrant rhetoric more heated, as described in Chapter 4, naturalization applicants may be required to more routinely submit additional documentation and may also experience more aggression, even hostility, in interactions with bureaucratic officials who are fully immersed in this anti-immigrant political environment and have adopted its position.

6.5 Conclusion

Prior to 2003, the only documentation requirement to obtain citizenship through marriage was a declaration of intent. The list of required documents was expanded in 2003-2004, then again in 2009-2010 to include an official application form and applicant’s passport, birth certificate, and residence permit. Applicants, however, report submitting a much wider variety of documents, many of which do not appear on the official list of requirements. Applicants’ experiences that I have described in this chapter, therefore, serve to illustrate one type of potential discretion vested in individual, lower-level bureaucrats: determining whether an applicant has met the documentation requirements. While the required documents are laid out in the laws and implementing regulations, respondents consistently report variation in what they were required to submit. Perhaps not surprisingly, consultants and attorneys likewise provided conflicting responses in terms of the “required” application documents. While the regulations governing naturalization indicate that language fluency, income, health status, and insurance requirements

should not apply to those naturalizing through marriage, the variation in applicant and attorney experience highlights how (in)frequently this is observed. While potentially evidence of bureaucratic discretion in action, influenced by the political environment, the variation in responses may also signal confusion within the bureaucracy and private sector regarding applicable requirements for different types of would-be citizens. With that said, however, the imposition of these requirements on marriage-based naturalization applicants, officially or not, brings them in line with other would-be citizens, making their suitability as citizens, their “Turkishness,” something to be proven rather than assumed by virtue of their marriage to a Turk.



CHAPTER 7. DISCRETIONARY POLICING AND SECURITIZATION: DETERMINING APPLICANTS’ “SUITABILITY” FOR CITIZENSHIP

7.1 *Introduction*

Officially beginning in 2003, would-be marriage-based citizenship applicants needed to not only be married for three years before becoming eligible to apply for citizenship, but the marriage also needed to be “ongoing” at the time of the application, with applicant and spouse living together, and marriages became more frequently subject to verification—at the discretion of application officials. This was in response to the practice of marrying only for citizenship, a practice that was so widespread that Kaan, an attorney in the Antalya region who works with a firm specializing in issues affecting foreigners, says,

Through marriage, that is to say, before the law was amended, there were dozens of individuals who acquired citizenship. How do we know that? It was so intense, there was such high demand, that some men here were doing it for money. So, they were getting married with the ladies, the ladies were acquiring citizenships, and we carried out their divorce procedures. [...] These weren't real marriages. When there was an arranged marriage at that time, they were required to get divorced immediately after acquiring their identity cards. They would come immediately. They did not wait (September 11, 2019).

Even before 2003, however, some marriages were already subject to police scrutiny. Four (out of 38) survey respondents and two interviewees who naturalized prior to Law No. 4866 (2003) report being interviewed as part of their application process; see Table 7-1: Survey respondents reporting interviews by time period. Nearly all survey respondents who had an interview also report lengthened application processes. Despite the fact that citizenship was virtually immediate for most applicants prior to 2003, the application process for two of the four survey respondents took more than two years. For Sofia and Olga, interviewees from Russia, the process was not quite that long, lasting about a year, and involved the police visiting their homes. As Sofia recalls, “they came and asked a lot of private questions like my husband’s eye color, shoe size, and so on.”⁴⁴ While my survey data indicates Russian women were not alone in having to complete additional

⁴⁴ Because Turkey has a dual police/gendarmerie law enforcement structure, references to the police or Police Directorate include the gendarmerie.

steps to naturalize in Turkey, the lengthened application process for certain applicants during this period was likely related to growing public concern over fake marriages.

Table 7-1: Survey respondents reporting interviews by time period								
	<2003	(38)	2003+	(18)	2010+	(82)	Total	(138)
Respondent	4	11%	16	89%	67	82%	87	63%
Partner	2	5%	13	72%	67	82%	82	59%
Partner family	0	0%	0	0%	7	9%	7	5%
Respondent family	0	0%	0	0%	2	2%	2	1%
Neighbors	0	0%	0	0%	5	6%	5	4%
Respondent / Partner children	0	0%	0	0%	3	4%	3	2%
Partner friends	0	0%	0	0%	1	1%	1	0.7%
Respondent friends	0	0%	0	0%	2	2%	2	1%
Don't know/don't remember	0	0%	1	5%	0	0%	1	0.7%

7.2 *Investigations and interviews of applicants: 2003-2009*

Under Law No. 4866 (2003), the Ministry of the Interior is authorized to carry out an investigation to determine whether marriage-based naturalization applicants meet the conditions of the law and implementing regulations. Specifically, applicant must not be engaged in activities that include prostitution, trafficking in women, etc., as well as not being objectionable in terms of the public order, national security, or general morality, see Table 7-2: Application processing 2003-2009. Determining applicants' suitability may be done via criminal history report or an interview. This represents the second stage of applicants' interactions with the bureaucracy as well as the second point of application officials' discretionary decision making. Where the initial interaction with the bureaucracy—and related discretionary decision—focuses on whether the applicant meets

technical requirements (i.e., the content and submission of “necessary” documentation), this second stage focuses on whether applicant meets specific objective requirements as well as subjective requirements related to applicants’ character and morality. We also see increased securitization of marriage-based naturalization during this period. Moving from the increased politicization of the issue during the late 1990s, marriage-based naturalization applicants are increasingly constructed as a potential threat to Turkey during this period, justifying stronger state investigation activities. This is apparent not only in the changed applicant criteria but also in how the application process is carried out by officials.

Table 7-2: Application processing 2003-2009	
Criteria	• Applicant must be living with her/his Turkish spouse (<i>force majeure</i> exceptions apply); • Applicant must not be engaged in activities such as prostitution, mediation or forced prostitution, or trafficking in women; and • Applicant must not be objectionable in terms of public order, national security, or general morality.
Process	General Directorate of Population and Citizenship Affairs (Ministry of the Interior). The Ministry of the Interior then determines the form and content of the research and investigation to be conducted.
Police / Gendarmerie	Conduct investigation, which may include a criminal record check and/or interview(s)
Application processing time	Varies

Of 18 survey respondents who naturalized during the period 2003-2009, 16 (89%) report being interviewed and 12 (67%) report their Turkish spouse was interviewed. Whether applicants were interviewed and whether they took place at the police station or at applicants’ homes was at the discretion of the officer(s). Therefore, the experiences of the five interviewees who applied for marriage-based naturalization during this period also vary from single, short, pro forma interviews

to more in-depth sessions attempting to ferret out a “fake” marriage. “Ashley” and “Juana” about their experiences with police interviews.

“Ashley” feels her police interview was more of a formality than anything else. She was married abroad; the ceremony was held in the U.K. in the early 1970s. While eligible for citizenship at the time of her marriage, applying for citizenship did not occur to Ashley; she and her husband had no real plans to move to Turkey at that time. This changed a few decades later, and they moved to Turkey in the early 2000s to build a home on his family’s land. She applied for citizenship in Turkey to avoid the hassle of ongoing residence permit applications. Ashley recalls that she and her husband were interviewed by the police, but they were allowed to be together. She felt the police viewed the interview as a mere formality because Ashley and her husband were financially stable, and their children were adults. Ashley found the overall process relatively easy, though she strongly believes—based on what she has heard of others’ experiences through various expat networks—that what is “required” for the application process depends on where the applicant lives. She says that she has frequently seen posts on social media from marriage-based naturalization applicants describing different requirements and steps they had to go through; she feels that officials in different areas have different levels of concern and impose different requirements for the process.

“Juana,” moved to Turkey and applied for citizenship at about the same time as Ashley, but she is from Colombia and lives in Istanbul. Juana also had a family residence permit until she applied for citizenship. Like Ashley, she grew tired of the constant need to renew her residence permit. Instead of a single interview, Juana had multiple interviews with the police: a home visit to see how the marriage was going and an interview at the police station. While she did not believe officials thought her marriage might be fake, Juana also never felt like any of her interviews were a formality; she found them a bit challenging. While she says the police weren’t unkind, they made it a point to test her Turkish language fluency and asked questions about a lot of different things, including her marriage and employment status.

Because police interviews were performed at the discretion of officials, their content and level of formality varied widely. These variations serve to highlight bureaucratic discretion in action, as some applicants were essentially rubber stamped while others who appear to be similarly

situated experienced a more difficult process. We also see increased securitization for applicants who naturalized 2003-2009 compared to applicants from before 2003. Police interviews are more common and appear more in depth, with some interviewees even reporting multiple police interviews.

7.3 *Investigations and interviews of applicants: 2010-2019*

Under Regulation 2010/139, the Police Directorate is tasked with conducting an investigation as to whether “applicant and spouse live in a family union,” whether applicant has engaged in activities “incompatible with the marriage union,” and whether the applicant poses a risk to national security or the public order; see Table 7-3: Application processing 2009-2019. Notably, none of these terms are defined. While the legislative intent may have been to establish more objective criteria for marriage-based naturalization applicants, the lack of definition and clarity surrounding these terms opens the way for greater bureaucratic discretion in this arena. Moreover, interviewee experiences indicate applicants may be treated very differently.

Table 7-3: Application processing 2009-2019	
Criteria	• Applicant must live with spouse in family unity; • Applicant must avoid acts not compatible with marriage unity; and • Applicant cannot pose a threat to national security or the public order.
Process	Directorate of Population requests an investigation from the Provincial Police Directorate
Provincial Police Directorate	Determines the form and content of the investigation, which may include a criminal record check and/or interview(s)
Application processing time	Varies

I spoke with 14 individuals who applied for marriage-based naturalization during the period 2010-2019 about their experiences with police interviews and investigations. Like those

from other periods, applicants' experiences differ. Though originally from Belgium, "Adeline" is a French citizen. She married in Turkey in 2015. When she applied for naturalization in 2018, Adeline was told she needed to make an appointment to be fingerprinted so the police could handle the background check, but this would take several weeks. As she recalls,

My husband wanted me to obtain citizenship before my residency permit expired because it had become more and more of a hassle to obtain it. So, he picked up his phone and called some guy he knows to put pressure on the bureaucracy. [...] They took my fingerprints the same day. Then they said there would be an inquiry; that a police officer would come to our home and visit and ask questions and check if we were really living where we stated we were and so on. But he said that we could do it on the phone. The phone call was very effective. I don't know who he called (June 9, 2019).

Adeline's simplified process is quite a contrast to the experience of "Evelyn." Originally from the U.K., Evelyn applied for naturalization in 2015. While Adeline's "home visit" was handled via phone call, Evelyn recalls,

Two policemen turned up at my house. They asked my neighbors what kind of a neighbor I am. So, it's pretty intrusive. They go through your whole family and your neighbors. At the time, I didn't like my neighbors and they didn't like me. We didn't really get on very well. So that was a dodgy conversation. [...] They even went to three streets up from my house and were asking people there if I cause a commotion, if I make noise (June 9, 2019).

A few days later, one of these neighbors knocked on her door and introduced herself to Evelyn. The neighbor said she had told the police nice things about Evelyn, despite never having met her. Evelyn invited the neighbor in for coffee; what else could she do? The kinds of questions the police asked Evelyn's neighbors are also strikingly different from previous police interviews noted by respondents where the officers' questions tended to focus on the Turkish spouse's family or personal characteristics (eye color, shoe size, etc.) rather than whether applicant is a "good neighbor."

According to consultants I interviewed, if the Turkish spouse is not home when the police conduct a visit, the police are to return at a later date to ensure applicant and spouse actually live together. Even though her husband was not home at the time, Evelyn had only one visit from the police. Michelle, on the other hand, received several visits; her then-husband is an intercity bus driver and was not at home. She notes, "[The police] said it's no trouble. They just called my husband while I was there, or I called and gave them the phone. They spoke to him and said it wasn't a problem and everything was fine." The one requirement the police eventually imposed

was that one of her husband's relatives needed to sign a form saying he knew Michelle. The police then told her everything was fine and not to worry.

"Iris" lives in a small village in the province of Antalya; she applied for naturalization in 2018. An officer came to their home but did not enter the house or speak with Iris. The officer told her husband they needed to come to their office the next day to be fingerprinted and have the interview. When they arrived at the office, they were told they would need four witnesses for their relationship, which was difficult at short notice in their small village. Iris' father-in-law was able to convince one person to come, which the gendarmerie accepted as sufficient. The gendarmerie asked Iris' husband about her Turkish language skills and whether she worked, but there did not appear to be any problems. They then had to go to the police station in Antalya for fingerprinting. As Iris notes,

That's where it started to go wrong. [...] There was a policewoman, and she asked my name and things like that and whether I spoke Turkish. I told her "A little." Then she asked me when we met. I started to say in Turkish "bir eylül" and she went "hayır, hayır! Yıl, yıl!" And it totally threw me, because in my head, I was thinking the first of September. I wanted to say 2013 and she stopped me mid-flow and it threw me off. That was it. She asked various other questions. Then she asked if my parents were still alive and about my name. Then she asked about my education. It was all in Turkish. When she asked about my education, if someone in England had asked me what my education was, I would have said that I went to school, I went to college and I went to university. So, I said, "*okul, kolej, üniversite*." At Antalya, they'd written *lise* because they said, "just put *lise*." But I was asked a question and I was giving an honest answer. She went "*hangi, hangi*?" So, I said "*üniversite*." Then she asked me something and I didn't understand, so my husband said, "but what did you do at university?" I studied horticulture, and I knew he wouldn't be able to translate it. So, I said "gardening." She turned to him and said, "you don't need to study gardening." So, what did she do? She grilled him on his background, his history, his previous marriage, his family's history, his work, etc. [...] Anyway, at the end of it, she gave me my report and she told him to read it. He was not happy, but he signed it. He told me that she'd written that my Turkish is very poor, and his English is very poor. But that none of it really mattered as the problem was our age difference. I'm 52 and he's 37. That is the big problem. I left in tears, and he left really angry. Because it was the police, he didn't say anything (June 28, 2019).

The variety of experiences reported by respondents—where interviews are held, the questions asked, and whether witnesses are required—provide an interesting contrast to what I was told by consultants and attorneys. I interviewed two consultants with a background in law enforcement, both of whom specifically noted their job duties had included investigations of applicants seeking to naturalize through marriage: İlkin (who was with the gendarmerie for 20 years prior to becoming a consultant in 2013) and Erkan (who left the police after 15 years to start a consulting firm in 2016). During interviews with these two consultants, both primarily emphasized the role of officers in uncovering fake marriages. To that end, both described a process

in which the officer(s) walk through the home to check for personal belongings and interview both spouses separately and together. While İlkin and Erkan say they may ask local shopkeepers or neighbors about the couple in unusual circumstances, they say their interviews really focused on the marriage—not the applicant’s background or other daily activities.

Apart from ensuring the marriage is “real,” the Police Directorate is charged with ensuring the applicant is not a risk to national security or the public order, though other officials weigh in on this as well. This question—what could be considered a risk to national security or the public order—was an interesting area of discussion with attorneys and consultants as neither phrase is defined within the law or governing regulations though it allows the state to take extraordinary steps in mitigating any such risk. For consultants İlkin and Erkan, the prohibition on citizenship for a person who poses a risk to the public order was solely equated with issues of prostitution and/or fake marriage. Perhaps this is not surprising, given their backgrounds in law enforcement. For Kaan and Ayşe, attorneys in the Antalya region, the public order requirement simply means the applicant cannot be a terrorist or have been convicted of *any* crime, whether in Turkey or elsewhere. While most attorneys and consultants interviewed focus on potential ties to crime or terrorism, one sees the issue quite differently. Başar is an attorney in Istanbul. He has not handled many cases related to naturalization but is familiar with the legal requirements and process. He says:

The public order is an interesting phrase to explain. What does public order mean? I don’t know; nobody knows. [...] You prepare all the documents needed for this application and submit them to the officials. You think you’ve done everything, you put that you’ve been married to a Turkish citizen for at least three years (more is welcome) and you put videos and social media accounts—this is important as well nowadays. [...] But it ultimately depends on what the officials think about your marriage and you. This is how it works in Turkey (April 10, 2019).

He goes on to say,

That’s why you have to be careful. You have to consider that your political thoughts, your political view, and which part of the country you come from matter. They dig into you. [...] I have heard but it is not proven that they check all your social media. It doesn’t matter which country you are coming from, whether you are Norwegian, Dutch, a Berliner, Londoner, it doesn’t matter. They do that. And when they do that kind of search, they think they are defending their country against evil (April 10, 2019).

Applicants’ experiences with the police offer contrasting insights into what might be considered red flags for a fake marriage or a threat to the public interest. While Adeline found that

her husband's connections put her above suspicion—the police only conducting a short interview by phone—others experienced a more intrusive process. As these interview snippets indicate, the police may impose additional requirements or interviews to prove the validity of the marriage, such as conducting multiple visits, interviewing neighbors, or requiring witnesses and/or affidavits. In Iris' case, they were very concerned about the 15-year age difference, believing it a “big problem.” They may also show wide latitude in determining whether an applicant is a threat to the public interest; Adeline had a simple background check performed, Evelyn's neighbors were asked if she “causes a commotion,” and Iris was asked about her education and family background.

7.4 Conclusion

While the potential for securitization—the construction of marriage-based naturalization applicants as a threat to national security—has been part of the legal and regulatory landscape of these would-be citizens, it was not until after 2003 that it was actively employed, and a majority of survey respondents were interviewed. Beginning in the post-2009 period, we can see a much more active role for the police/security forces in terms of who is interviewed as part of the naturalization process, and interviewees indicate a wider variety of questions are more frequently asked. Police officials' questions include anything, from the Turkish spouse's physical characteristics or background to applicant's background and employment to daily practices. Police officials use these interviews to gauge the authenticity of applicants' marriages as well as whether they “deserve” citizenship. Decisions regarding the authenticity of a marriage may be determined with reference to apparent inconsistencies with “typical” marriage practices (e.g., a large age gap between spouses), whether applicant and spouse live together, and/or whether applicant has detailed knowledge of their Turkish spouse. “Deservingness,” or suitability, appears correlated with applicant's background and Turkish skill level, which appears to be another area of concern for police officials, as well as private behaviors that neighbors may have noticed (e.g., being a “good” neighbor).

It is after 2009 that there also appears to be much more of a focus on the question of whether applicant poses a problem in terms of the public order. As the second point of discretionary decision making, it is crucial to understand the guidelines informing whether an applicant meets the subjective criteria of marriage unity, good morals, and not posing a threat to the public order.

Unfortunately, other than a few bright line boundaries, neither former law enforcement officials nor other consultants or attorneys were able to clearly and consistently articulate how applicants may or may not demonstrate these characteristics. Moreover, police officials' concern with interviewees' Turkish skill level, background, and other characteristics reveals a potential lack of internal guidance on the subject as well as how extralegal factors may be considered at officials' discretion. The characteristics expected of marriage-based naturalization applicants—e.g., Turkish language skills, private behaviors, and being a “good” neighbor—also serve to highlight how the performance of a particular understanding of the Turkish national identity plays a role in officials' decision-making process.

CHAPTER 8. THE ROLE OF BUREAUCRATIC DISCRETION IN THE CITIZENSHIP APPLICATION REVIEW COMMISSION

8.1 *Introduction*

The Citizenship Application Review Commission (CARC) is first mentioned in Article 17 of the Turkish Citizenship Draft Law (2006), which notes “...the Citizenship Application Review Commission to be established in the provinces will determine whether the foreigners who want to acquire Turkish citizenship meet the necessary conditions for application. As a result of the determination, the requests of those who do not meet the necessary conditions for the application will not be processed and unnecessary time loss will be prevented. The establishment and working principles of this commission will be determined by a regulation.”⁴⁵ After the police/gendarmerie conclude their investigation, their findings are included in the applicant’s file that is then forwarded to the CARC. These files are to include documents submitted as part of the first stage of the application, including any additional documents demanded by officials, as well as investigative interview findings, and the results of any criminal background checks. Applicants are then contacted to schedule the final interview with the CARC.

8.2 *2003-2009: The roots of the Citizenship Application Review Commission?*

The CARC was officially instituted when Law No. 5901 (2009), the new Turkish Citizenship Law, was enacted on June 12, 2009. According to Regulation 2010/139, the applicant and spouse are to be examined separately and together by the CARC to investigate whether the marriage is “real” or was made in order to acquire Turkish citizenship. However, several interviewees who naturalized Law No. 5901 was enacted were required to have panel interviews similar to the CARC, indicating that the practice may predate the legal requirement. I asked “Kirstin,” “Ekaterina,” “Mary,” and “Juana” about any additional interviews they had after being interviewed (or investigated) by the police.

“Kirstin,” from the U.S., applied for Turkish citizenship in 2003. She recalls,

⁴⁵ Turkish text of draft law dated February 20, 2006, available at <https://www2.tbmm.gov.tr/d22/1/1-1192.pdf>

There were seven people there in U-shaped conference room area. They took my husband and I in separately and they asked me to recite the first verses of the national anthem. Then they asked us a bunch of questions like “how long have you been married? Do you have kids?” [...] I was able to speak Turkish by that point, so I didn’t have too much trouble with it. They didn’t ask us a lot of questions. Mostly they were just curious about how we had met and things like that. There were other couples in the line where it was a considerably older Turkish man with a very young Ukrainian or Russian woman. Some of them came out crying. They didn’t have as easy a time as we did. By that time, our kids were already in middle school, so I don’t think they questioned the legitimacy of our marriage (April 28, 2019).

“Ekaterina” is originally from Moldova and a member of the Gagauz (ethnic Turkic) minority. She and her husband married in 2004, and she applied for citizenship in 2007. She recalls the naturalization application process took about a year after she became eligible for citizenship. Ekaterina remembers feeling as though she were sitting in front of the exam board as she faced 18 people, including psychologists from Ankara who were there to observe the behavior of applicants. During her interview with the panel, Ekaterina was asked questions such as whether she knows her husband’s family and how much he earns. Ekaterina also had to sing the Turkish national anthem. She made sure to bring their son with her to the panel interview; as both a holder of Turkish citizenship through marriage and a consultant that primarily works with other immigrants from Moldova, Ekaterina strongly believes that applicants with children experience an easier time with their cases.

“Mary,” on the other hand, is an attorney originally from the United States, where she and her Turkish husband met and married during university. More than a decade later, they moved to Turkey with their teenage children, but Mary chose not to apply for citizenship right away. Because she had a work permit, she feels there was less pressure to naturalize. When she finally applied for naturalization in 2009, she says her CARC interviewers frequently expressed concerns that hers was a fake marriage, despite the fact Mary and her husband had children in their late teens. It is interesting that, in Mary’s case, having children together was not necessarily seen as proof of a “real” marriage. This might have been because Mary was employed; there has been concern with the instrumental use of citizenship to access the labor market.

Like Mary, “Juana,” from Colombia, also applied in 2009, straddling the line between when Law No. 5901 (2009) was enacted and when it was implemented. While Mary did not have an interview with the police, Juana had multiple interviews with officials, including two with the

police and one with the CARC, more typical of those who applied after Law No. 5901 (2009) was implemented via Regulation 2010/139. Regarding the CARC interview, she recalls:

You had to sing part of the national anthem and they wanted to hear you speaking Turkish somewhat fluently. They would ask you some questions here and there (June 20, 2019).

The extralegal requirement of knowing the national anthem serves to highlight a concern with the Turkish national identity on the part of officials involved in the naturalization application process. Going beyond the question of integration, requiring applicants to sing the national anthem may be an attempt by officials to instill (or test for) the sense of (national) identity, connection, and patriotism believed to be evoked by hearing or singing one's national anthem (see, for example, Gilboa & Bodner, 2009).

Further contrasting Mary and Juana's experiences, though they applied at nearly the same time in the same province, provides an interesting glimpse of differences in their application processes. While both had been living in Turkey for several years before applying for citizenship, Mary was employed during this time while Juana was not. Did this difference contribute to their different experiences with the CARC, which was concerned about the possibility of a fake marriage in Mary's case but focused on language fluency in Juana's case? This apparent interest in ensuring Turkish language fluency is also interesting; language fluency is not a requirement for those seeking Turkish citizenship through marriage but can be considered an indicator of integration and/or overall "Turkishness." As discussed in Chapter 2, maintaining the national identity is a key component of the ongoing nation-building project. As such, those who show conformance with the current understanding of the national identity—or at least a sufficient degree of integration so as not to be perceived as a threat to that identity—are more likely to be seen as "deserving" or "worthy" of citizenship.

8.3 2010-2019: Institutionalization of the Citizenship Application Review Commission

Law No. 5901 (2009) was implemented via Regulation 2010/139. Under this regulation, the Deputy Provincial Governor and representatives from the Provincial Police Directorate, Provincial National Education Directorate, and Economics Ministry comprise the Citizenship Application Review Commission (CARC), which is tasked with investigating whether the marriage is "real"

or made to acquire Turkish citizenship.⁴⁶ Though the procedures set out in the regulation specify the applicant and spouse are to be questioned separately and together to make this determination of authenticity, actual practices—and areas of inquiry—vary widely. Interestingly, the attorneys and consultants interviewed had very different ideas about the goals and questions of the CARC. According to Erkan, consultant, the CARC interview:

... estimates knowledge on Turkish culture and determines whether the migrant feels Turkish. They [the CARC] consider Turkish language and history of Turkey the most important. For example, they ask questions on Atatürk or the presidents or significant state officials spontaneously. Sometimes, two stanzas of the national anthem are asked (June 12, 2019).

Deniz (an attorney) and Ahmet (a consultant) stated the CARC seeks to evaluate whether an applicant's lifestyle is compatible with Turkish culture and customs and whether the individual will be able to integrate into Turkish society. Ahmet further notes the CARC evaluates the applicant's moral character. Fişek and Cansu, both consultants, challenge this assertion and emphasize the CARC is only concerned with whether the applicant and spouse live in family unity.

These different understandings of the CARC, based on attorney and consultant experiences with it, indicate the CARC may seek to achieve wildly different goals, leading to very different experiences with the CARC for marriage-based naturalization applicants. I spoke with 14 fourteen people—13 women and one man—who applied for marriage-based naturalization during the period 2010-2019 about their experiences with the CARC. Originally from Sweden, “Klara” was working in the tourism industry when she met and married her husband in the late 1990s. Similar to several others, Klara chose to apply for citizenship in 2010 so she would be able to more easily work legally and no longer have to apply for visas and residence permits. In fact, she notes she and her husband actually chose to marry so she could get citizenship and take advantage of the convenience it offered. When Klara was interviewed by the CARC, she says it felt like more of a formality, and they showed little concern about the possibility of a fake marriage. She recalls having a brief chat with the CARC about her life in Turkey and how she made her living. She

⁴⁶ During the period 2010-2019, 13 of 82 (16%) of survey respondents report that neither they nor their spouse were interviewed as part of the application process (neither by the police nor the Citizenship Application Review Commission). Most interviewees, however, were interviewed by one or both. This seems to indicate that interviews are commonly—if not always—performed.

notes, “Where I got my money from was the important question for them. It took maybe 2-3 minutes; it was very, very short.” Adeline had a similar experience. She says she was asked very general questions such as her profession, how long she had lived in Turkey, and the household monthly income.

“David,” the son of a Swedish mother and Tunisian father, lives in Ankara. David met his wife online, through a music sharing program, and moved to Turkey to be with her. They married in 2010; he applied for citizenship in 2015. When David met with the CARC in late 2016, he was asked why he wanted to become a citizen, though he says it seemed to be a source of pride that a European was applying for citizenship. He recalls having to learn the national anthem and sing it for the CARC interview. Notably, Klara, Adeline, and David were interviewed with their spouses present; none were interviewed separately.

From the physical setup of the room to how the interview is handled, applicants’ experiences can be strikingly different. Instead of facing a single table filled with officials like Ekaterina, Michelle recalls a somewhat informal setup, with two couches and a long table, and several people seated on the sofas. The moment the interview started, however,

They immediately started firing Turkish at me that was so fast, it was like from a comedy movie. Even my husband said they were speaking too fast for him to understand half of it. He said to them “if you speak a bit slower, she will understand you.” But then they didn’t speak to me after that. They just spoke to him about his job (September 4, 2019).

While her own interview was uneventful, Evelyn from the U.K. recalls,

There was a Dutch lady there on the same day as me. I’m 32; She was a good 20-something years older than me. She got asked some personal questions; they don’t mince their words. They said, “why do you want citizenship; we take it, at your age, your husband is just marrying you for your money.” They don’t mess around (May 30, 2019).

Iris experienced this firsthand. Iris was interviewed solely with her husband and continued to struggle speaking Turkish at the CARC interview. Her husband was told he would not be allowed to assist her, and she would have to answer everything in Turkish. Iris misunderstood the first question, and says,

They just spoke to my husband the whole time after that. They didn’t ask me another question. At the end, they spoke to Mehmet, and the chairman said to me “you must go to school, and you must learn Turkish.”

Then he said to my husband “when your wife comes back, she will be expected to answer everything in Turkish.” Also, my husband told me a few days ago that he said, “she will be very lucky to get it.” Apparently on the way out, he could hear them discussing it, with one person saying they wanted to give it and another saying he didn’t (June 28, 2019).

Melissa, who is from the United States, had a similarly interesting interview with the CARC. She recalls,

They took my husband in first and I heard some shouting inside, which was a little disconcerting. I couldn’t tell what was going on. My husband came out with a grim look on his face. He later told me that they had given him trouble. [...] Apparently when my husband came in, the vice-governor [...] made some rude comments about me and my husband (May 30, 2019).

Then it was her turn with the CARC. After confirming her name, the vice-governor claimed he had seen Melissa looking “harshly” at her husband when he passed them in the hallway earlier. He told Melissa, “I just assumed you were Russian because you were treating your husband badly. You shouldn’t treat our *aslan gibi oğlumuz* [lionlike] men like that. We are proud of our Turkish citizens; you shouldn’t treat your Turkish husband that way.” Because Melissa had also taken a Turkish middle name, in addition to her husband’s surname, the CARC wanted additional information:

He [the vice-governor] said, “oh, I see that you’ve chosen a Muslim name, so you must have converted, right?” I said, “oh, does it say that? I actually didn’t put that on my application.” He said “oh, don’t you like Islam? Don’t you respect Islam” or something like that. I said “I do. I respect it but I haven’t chosen to convert. *Düşünüyorum*.” [...] He said, “oh, have you learned of Islam and from whom?” I said, “from my mother-in-law; she taught me how to pray.” Which he seemed satisfied by. Then he started asking questions about my religious practice. He said, “do you go to church?” [...] Then he started asking about my family, my in-laws. “What do your in-laws think about you, as a Christian, marrying into the family? Do they approve of you? Do they like you? Do they want you?” [...] Then they asked about my family. “Have they visited you in Turkey?” I said “no.” “Why haven’t they? Don’t they like Turkey? [...] Are they religious? Do they go to church?” (May 30, 2019).

According to Melissa, “It seemed like they were trying to determine if I was a missionary or if I had some kind of secret agenda.” After they asked about her adopted siblings, the CARC continued on the subject of family, asking whether Melissa had any children.

Overall, applicants’ experiences with the CARC demonstrate some level of concern with fake marriages but a significantly higher level of concern with applicants’ “Turkishness,” including how well applicants speak Turkish, their knowledge of the national anthem, even their religious practices. This adds support to statements from Erkan, Deniz, and Ahmet, who all indicate the CARC is more concerned with applicants’ knowledge of Turkey and its customs, how

well they will integrate, and even applicants' moral character than rooting out fake marriages. This also indicates a strong connection between marriage-based naturalization and the nation-building activities of the state,

8.4 Conclusion

While the Citizenship Application Review Commission was not officially instituted for marriage-based naturalization applicants until Law No. 5901 (2009) was enacted, some applicants needed to undergo this third step in the application process. Interview and survey data indicate significant variation in whether interviews occurred and who was interviewed. Even after interviews with the CARC became required, not all applicants or their partners were interviewed. Moreover, we can see significant variation in the types of questions asked by the CARC. While interviews with the CARC are ostensibly meant to ascertain the validity of the marriage, they often focus as much—if not more so—on indications of “Turkishness” (e.g., knowledge of Turkish language, culture, and religion) and children, highlighting an apparent preference for applicants who are performing the Turkish identity in specific ways. This is also be linked to the current Turkish context. Not only has heightened anti-immigrant sentiment likely affected the naturalization process itself, making it more challenging to navigate, but the national identity has also been under challenge. The state, therefore, may be seeking to reinforce specific conceptions of the Turkish national identity by ensuring marriage-based naturalization applicants are correctly performing this identity.

Overall, interviewees experiences with the CARC have raised two important areas to address. First, applicants' experiences, specifically the roles of gender, identity, and the public interest in an ongoing nation-building project, should be examined. Second, the reported variability in CARC interviews raises an important question: when does bureaucratic discretion amount to a *de facto* policy? In the next chapter, I will specifically discuss both of these areas: the interview themes of identity, gender, reproductivity, and the public interest vis-à-vis the literature review and the question of what constitutes a *de facto* policy.

CHAPTER 9. THEMES FROM THE LITERATURE AND RESPONDENT LIVED EXPERIENCES: GENDER, REPRODUCTIVITY, IDENTITY, AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST

9.1 *Introduction*

Even for those with an individual residence permit, life without citizenship can be daunting and precarious. A foreigner married to a Turkish spouse—and thus potentially eligible for citizenship—therefore has incentives and pressures to naturalize if they plan to remain in Turkey. While these incentives and pressures are not unique to marriage-based citizenship applicants, these applicants are uniquely positioned within the citizenship law and attendant regulations in not being required to speak Turkish, reside in Turkey for a specific period of time, or show other indications of integration. In line with the literature, I have shown that these types of requirements for (most) would-be citizens are reinforcing the contours of the Turkish identity and are explicitly considered part of an ongoing nation-building project. The exemption for marriage-based applicants would appear to except them from the ongoing nation-building project. Instead, I provide evidence that bureaucratic discretion applied during the naturalization application process frequently imposes many of the same requirements, thereby making the process of naturalization for marriage-based citizenship applicants an unofficial part of this ongoing nation-building project.

In this chapter, I first examine specific themes raised in the interviews (identity, gender, and the public interest) vis-à-vis the themes presented in the literature review (the national identity, gender, and bureaucratic discretion in service of the ongoing nation-building project). This is followed by a discussion on how the Turkish state polices the marriage, culture, and/or national identity of marriage-based citizenship applicants as a means of protecting the Turkish national identity. I then turn to the question of bureaucratic discretion and *de facto* policy.

9.2 *Naturalization and the ongoing nation-building project*

Citizenship policy is a critical component of nation-building as it delineates members and non-members, who the state is meant to protect, and who is excluded. Perhaps particularly for destination and transit countries of immigration, naturalized citizenship plays a significant role in

ongoing nation-building, reinforcing conceptions of the state and the national identity. To some extent, citizenship policies of a state may be seen as a reflection of contemporaneous culture, political will, economic interests, markets and international institutions (Brubaker, 1992; Jacobson, 1996; Joppke, 1998; Kymlicka & Norman, 1994). At the same time, both citizenship policies and how they are applied in practice reinforce specific understandings of the state, which may be at odds with these competing interests. Moreover, as Weldon (2006) found, cultural traditions governing state membership are embodied within citizenship laws and regulations, resulting in a strong relationship between the laws governing citizenship and citizens' tolerance of ethnic minorities. Thus, despite apparent convergence and liberalization in citizenship policy, it is used explicitly and implicitly to reinforce symbolic borders and national conceptions of who belongs within the state.

9.3 *Identity: State expectations and applicant performances*

As Bauböck (2006b, p. 16) notes, the definition of citizenship encompasses "...individual practices, dispositions and identities attributed to, or expected from those who hold [citizen] status." As expressed by citizens and society, these characteristics noted by Bauböck create and reify the national identity and the moral boundaries of the state. Individual and collective identities—their perception and negotiation—are a crucial component of the nation-building project. For the nation-state, the national identity—and its limits—may be expressed in terms of shared language, culture, and/or ethnic or ethno-religious identity. While those who seek to naturalize via so-called "regular" citizenship are subject to integration requirements as a means of restricting would-be citizens to those sharing the same identity characteristics, international pressure and internal demographics have frequently resulted in the exclusion of marriage-based naturalization applicants from these types of requirements. It is for this reason that marriage-based naturalization, in particular, can pose a threat to understandings of the national identity and thus the ongoing nation-building project (Bonjour & de Hart, 2013; Cole, 2014; de Hart, 2015a; Orgad, 2016). While various states have responded by imposing cultural assimilation requirements as a prerequisite for citizenship—even immigration—this is not the case for those seeking citizenship through marriage in Turkey. This crucial theme of identity, however, becomes apparent through interviews as applicants discuss their experiences with unwritten integration requirements and performance of the Turkish identity.

At the applicant level, Turkey does not have the same stringent expectations of (female) marriage migrants of states like South Korea or Japan (e.g., full assimilation into and reproduction of the dominant culture, including gendered caregiving responsibilities),⁴⁷ but interviews indicate there is an expectation that marriage migrants be aware of and integrated into Turkish cultural activities and norms to a significant degree. For most attorneys and consultants I spoke with, interactions with the Citizenship Application Review Commission (CARC) are intended to gauge applicants' integration into Turkish society and culture—regardless of applicants' naturalization pathway—as much as whether the marriage forming the basis for the application is genuine. According to Cansu, Murat, and Erkan, consultants, the CARC gauges applicant's level of integration based on answers to proxy questions about Turkish history or preparing Turkish food, whether applicant can sing or recite the national anthem, and applicant's Turkish language skills. Erkan (consultant) specifically notes that the CARC asks questions “about Turkey and being a Turk,” which may include questions about famous Turks, political figures, family life, and/or current events.

As discussed in Chapter 8, when it comes to the CARC interview, applicants must essentially perform their understanding of the Turkish identity, the individual practices and attitudes referenced by Bauböck (2006b). This could be in regard to Islam, having children, and family life (as in Melissa's case) or may involve other aspects of “Turkishness,” including language skills. As Piller (2001) points out, the importance of a shared language as part of the national identity is ideologically driven (e.g., “one nation, one language”). This emphasis on a single shared language has long been part of the Turkish context but has not necessarily been applied to marriage-based naturalization applicants; higher levels of skill may serve as another indicator of “Turkishness.”

In addition to (unofficially) testing applicant's language skills, CARC officials may also applicant's association with the Turkish identity in another way: requiring the applicant to sing or recite all or part of the national anthem. While many of the attorneys and consultants interviewed indicated that knowledge of the national anthem was no longer required of applicants, the

⁴⁷ See, for example, Cheng (2011); J. Kim & Kwon (2012); M. Kim (2013); Le Bail (2017); Moon (2015).

experience was very common among applicant interviewees. According to Gilboa and Bodner (2009), hearing the national anthem of one's home state is associated with feelings of community and patriotism. Waterman (2019) argues that national anthems are created and utilized by the state in order to generate such feelings among citizens.⁴⁸ Officials requiring that applicants sing or recite the national anthem may therefore be attempting to either instill such feelings in applicants or testing whether applicants have feelings of patriotism, pride, and community toward Turkey. As an expression of knowledge of Turkey and Turkish culture, knowledge of the national anthem goes somewhat beyond what is expected of native-born Turkish citizens. As Kaan (attorney) notes, "Turks don't even know [it]! Go out on the street, choose a random guy, and ask him to say it; he can't say [the anthem] from beginning to end."

Perhaps the clearest indication of the importance of identity in the naturalization application process is when the applicant is denied citizenship based on a component of their identity. Inessa is from Russia and is the head of a Russian cultural organization in the province where she lives. She and her husband moved to Turkey in 2005 with their four children. She did not apply for citizenship right away because she was not sure if she wanted to stay in Turkey. She eventually realized she felt more comfortable in Turkey than in Russia and decided to apply for citizenship in 2011. She recalls the CARC asked very simple, superficial questions and did not seem concerned. Then, in October 2012, she received notice that her naturalization application had been rejected because she "represented a danger to the Turkish Republic." Inessa and her husband hired an attorney and filed an appeal; they wanted the court to explain how she represented a danger. She received a ruling from the court confirming the decision to deny her citizenship and providing more detailed information about the denial. Inessa's application was denied for two primary reasons: first, because she is in contact with representatives of the embassy and consulate of the Russian Federation; and second, because she was accused of missionary activity. Inessa does not deny being in contact with representatives of the Russian government through the consulate and embassy. She explains that, due to her role in the Russian cultural organization,

⁴⁸ He notes, however, that national anthems are less effective in generating feelings of patriotism and connection among members of the state's minority and/or marginalized communities as they may also serve to exaggerate differences (Waterman, 2019).

people often approach her and other staff members for assistance, which requires they contact the consulate. She insists she has never participated in missionary activity, though she did help collect signatures from other Christians on a petition encouraging the building of a new Orthodox Christian church. After her naturalization application was denied, when Inessa next renewed her family residence permit, she received a visit from the gendarmerie seeking to verify her marriage, where their four children were born, and their age. She has noticed the residence permit process becoming more difficult but is resolved to remain in Turkey.

“Michelle” was also denied for citizenship but does not know why; she would have to travel to Antalya from Alanya to find out, as she never received a letter or official statement. Originally from the U.K., Michelle moved to Turkey in 2008—long before she met her (now ex) husband. After her application was denied, she eventually got divorced and has decided to return to the U.K. She links both her divorce and her decision to return to the U.K. to her failed naturalization application. Reflecting on the situation, she says, “I think being turned down for citizenship [...] I was so upset. I found it [...] a massive rejection. It sounds silly even when I’m saying it, but that’s how it felt. Like I don’t belong. That’s how I felt, and that’s how I feel.”

For Michelle, Turkey’s rejection of her as a would-be citizen was also an unwritten rejection of a fundamental part of her identity: her religion. Having spent more than a decade living in Turkey, Michelle believes growing Islamization is erasing the “secular” component of the Turkish state and national identity. She connects this to both the ruling party and society, saying, “I actually think it has come down from the government. I think it starts at the top with Erdoğan. I think he instructs the officials. I think the whole thing is going through to the public from him.” She believes this is behind some of the changes she has seen in Turkey that add to her feeling of not belonging, saying, “Prejudice is getting more. [...] Turks are getting much more prejudiced against foreigners generally and Christians particularly. It’s so difficult now to just get your *ikamet*. They’re just making everything more and more difficult.” Once openly Christian, Michelle has stopped wearing her cross in public because people seem so offended by it. She says she has heard people speaking in Turkish about her, calling her a “dirty Christian” and saying it’s a “disgusting religion.”

9.4 *Gender: The expected roles of women and gendered vulnerabilities*

Statistical data indicate that while only slightly more women than men immigrate to Turkey (901,179 women vs. 890,857 men), they marry Turkish citizens more than four times as often (242,635 women vs. 49,805 men) and, according to the most recent data available (2000-2011), seek naturalization through marriage at strikingly higher rates than men: more than five times as often for the top ten countries of origin (see **Error! Reference source not found.** and **Error! Reference source not found.**). While the current laws and regulations governing citizenship acquisition are gender neutral, the strongly gendered patterns of immigration and citizenship still have an impact on the naturalization application process. This can be seen in the reproductive role expected by officials throughout the naturalization application process, the type of relationship perceived as a “real” marriage, and the gendered vulnerabilities resulting from marriage and naturalization patterns.

Yuval-Davis (1996) and de Hart (2015a) have both written extensively on gender roles in nation-building, particularly with regard to women’s reproductive roles. Kofman (2004), further asserts that state immigration and citizenship controls related to marriage force applicants to conform to specific understandings of their gender roles, particularly the reproductive roles of women. This became important for several interviewees. As Ada notes, “Children are kind of a national fixation; you are asked by everybody [about kids] because the purpose of a woman is to get married and carry children.” In fact, if applicant has children with the Turkish spouse, many attorneys and consultants encourage applicant to bring their child(ren) to any appointments or interviews in the process to prove how much of a “family unit” they are. Evelyn recalls she was told “You have to take the children; you’re not allowed to not take the children with you. At the time, my daughter was in crèche, and I asked if I could leave her there and just go. But no, you have to all come together to everything.” Cansu (consultant) and Mary (attorney) from Istanbul also note that applicants with children experience an easier time. According to Erkan, another consultant, this is because “having a child [...] indicates an unbreakable tie.” Fişek (consultant) calls children a “fundamental” component of family unity. Kaan, an attorney in the Antalya region, goes a bit further and asserts that a child born after the wedding is what makes the marriage a “real” one.

Applicants who do not have children with their spouse may navigate this issue differently. David and his wife brought his step-daughter—his wife’s child from a previous marriage—with them to various appointments. He was not asked whether they planned to have additional children. Melissa had also heard through social media and other network connections that people who have children with their Turkish spouse experience a much faster and easier process. Though she and her partner do not have children, she kept this in mind during her interviews. She recalls,

They asked me “don’t you have any children?” I said “no, not yet.” I said it in kind of a sad tone. I’ve heard that it helps in the application process if you have children. So, I said something like “*Inşallah*,” and they accepted that (May 30, 2019).

For older applicants, this focus on reproduction can be an issue. Both Iris and Michelle are older applicants. Iris was in her late 40s when she married in 2015; she cannot have children, though her (Turkish) doctor took her and her husband to task for not trying harder. The CARC reacted in a similar fashion, haranguing Iris’ husband about their lack of children. Michelle was also asked about children. She says,

They asked us if we’d got any children and why not. I said, “what are you talking about? I’m 53! My kids are grown up.” He’s not a 20-year-old waiter; he’s 50 as well. But he hasn’t got any kids, and they seemed to think it was strange (September 4, 2019).

While Evelyn was waiting for her turn with the Commission, she met a Dutch woman in her mid-50s who fell in love with her Turkish husband after her first husband had died of cancer. She believes that older people, older women in particular, have a more difficult time obtaining citizenship through marriage. In Evelyn’s province, the CARC interviewed each applicant in front of the others. As Evelyn recalls, “[the CARC] said ‘why do you want citizenship? You don’t have kids. We take it, at your age, your husband is just marrying you for your money.’ They don’t seem to understand that love can come at any age; that’s what I thought was quite disturbing in a way.”

Children may provide evidence of family unity and/or of a “real marriage,” but they are also the focus of significant state efforts to inculcate the national identity, as well as norms and practices related to family life. The focus of officials evaluating the application therefore shifts from the foreign spouse—generally the wife—as the applicant to the family as the applicant. As Pellander (2015), Williams (2010), Acar and Altunok (Acar & Altunok, 2013) and Kofman (2004), among others, note, the state has an interest in regulating intimate and family practices, particularly

for those applying for citizenship through marriage. In effect, this means family practices and/or dynamics are open to questioning and criticism. When Iris and her husband were interviewed by the CARC, for example, she recalls,

They asked about his background, about his previous marriage. They asked about my family and if he had met them. They asked about his family. In public, my husband is very much a no emotion, no physical contact kind of person; it's just the way he is. So, we sat apart on the sofa, and he told them that he loved me very much and so on. The chairman told him "Sit next to your wife." Then he said to my husband, "promise me you'll not divorce her like you have already divorced your first wife." He made Mehmet translate that to me (June 28, 2019).

This focus on family and intimate practices is meant to ensure the success of the ongoing nation-building project, that couples' values and behavior, both public and private, are "compatible with Turkish culture and customs," i.e., that they fit within socio-cultural practices and understandings of what it means to be Turkish. This occurs within the context of growing Islamization and focus on the family by the AKP. As Coşar & Yeğenoğlu (2011) note, "[the AKP] has also been persistent in its conservative approach to womanhood, shaped first and foremost in terms of the familial sphere on the basis of religious-nationalist understanding." Kaya (2015) also notes a strong emphasis on the family in AKP policy and states, "The AKP's approach to women also deserves particular attention: it tends to see family and marriage as the natural course for women." Kaya (2015) cites statements made by Erdoğan about women and abortion, changes in abortion availability and procedures, and decreasing female employment in Turkey as evidence of this approach. It is also worth noting that, according to Acar and Altunok (Acar & Altunok, 2013), AKP government rhetoric is traceable to specific Islamic teachings that prescribe and/or stigmatize particular behaviors and the law has been instrumentalized to achieve moral purposes based on this rhetoric. The attempted criminalization of adultery and institutionalization of abortion without anesthesia (as "punishment") at public hospitals noted by Kaya (2015) are clear examples of this and further indicate that even when such rhetoric does not become law, it has a demonstrable effect. As such, I argue that government rhetoric is a contributing factor in the use of bureaucratic discretion supporting a specific understanding of the national identity.

Gendered and ethnicized immigration, marriage, and naturalization patterns in Turkey also create patterns of vulnerabilities. As in many other states, an immigrant's ability to access the labor market is tied to the type of visa s/he was granted. A family residence permit, for example, does

not allow the foreign spouse access to the labor market; this must be applied for separately with sponsorship from the prospective employer. Because the vast majority of foreign spouses are women, this reifies the male's role as the primary (or sole) breadwinner, encouraging dependence on the Turkish spouse and exacerbating the potential vulnerability of the foreign spouse. If the foreign spouse does not speak a sufficient amount of Turkish, s/he may not even be aware that citizenship is an option if the couple already meets the three-year marriage requirement. Unlike many other states, Turkey's requirement for foreign spouses is based on the length of the marriage, not residence within the state itself.⁴⁹ Inessa, for example, was eligible for citizenship when she moved to Turkey in 2004. Her husband declined it on her behalf when he applied for her family residence permit. In a similar fashion, the Turkish spouse may also deny their spouse citizenship during the police/gendarmerie interview and/or home inspection phase of the naturalization application process. According to several interviewees, it is at this time, while the partners are separated, that the investigator asks the Turkish spouse if s/he consents to the foreign spouse gaining Turkish citizenship. This is asked in addition to questions seeking to determine the veracity of the marriage. According to Ahmet, a consultant, "If the Turkish spouse answers in the negative, the standard procedures continue. Approximately eight months or one year later the applicant receives a denial. But explanations for the denial are never provided." When I expressed my surprise and asked other attorneys and consultants about such situations, I was told it did not occur frequently but Kaan, Ayşe, and Deniz have also had clients—women—experience this situation.

Overall, interviews with marriage-based naturalization applicants and attorneys and consultants illustrate the impact of the strongly gendered patterns of immigration and naturalization. From women's role in biological and cultural reproduction to the importance (and gendered role) of the family in government rhetoric and policy, interviews indicate that naturalization officials, police and CARC members alike, are concerned with specific performances of gender identity that relate to the "Turkish" identity. While this research cannot speak to the variety of questions men may be asked or the encounters they specifically may have

⁴⁹ Turkey's lack of a residence requirement for marriage-based naturalization may be another manifestation of its favorable policies toward Turkish emigrants and the diaspora described by Kadirbeyoğlu (2010) and may encourage return migration.

with officials, it is clear that there are often unwritten expectations of women who apply for marriage-based naturalization related to reproductive and caregiving work.

9.5 *Bureaucratic discretion and the public interest*

Naturalization decisions made by bureaucratic officials serve as indicators of formal state policies and informal understandings of the nation, citizenship, and the public interest. While Turkey is a centralized state, there remains significant room for discretion in bureaucratic officials' work, from frontline decision-making to policy interpretation. Just as importantly, as Aras and Yorulmazlar (2018) have noted, the bureaucracy sees itself as the protector of the nation and its founding principles. With this in mind, a significant component of naturalization highlighted by interviews is the discretionary nature of both what constitutes "national security" and/or the "public interest" and what constitutes a threat to either. While it is possible these are defined by the central government, there are sufficient variations that would seem to indicate a certain amount of latitude in areas of focus. Ahmet, a consultant in Ankara who has been in business for 18 years, highlights regional differences in how national security is defined by bureaucratic officials: "In Western cities, such as Ankara and Istanbul, involvement in prostitution for women or drug-related activities for men are topics of particular attention. In Hatay and in provinces, located further east, [more attention is paid] to terrorism." Ahmet asserts that the "public interest," on the other hand, has been defined as "leading a lifestyle compatible with Turkish customs and traditions." He says, "This expression—leading a lifestyle, compatible with Turkish customs and traditions—is not a colloquial one. This exact expression [for the public interest] is used by the Directorate General of Population and Citizenship Affairs." By comparison, Başar, an attorney in Istanbul, emphasizes the importance of the political climate in defining the characteristics that might be seen as a threat to national security and/or the public interest. For example, he posits how a recent political clash between Turkey and Norway, combined with perceptions of Norwegians as "activists" and "atheists," could impact bureaucratic review of an application. In his view, "activism" could be seen as a threat by the government, and the latter is perceived as a threat by the public (see, for example, Freedom House, 2023; Gurini, 2018; Hurriyet Daily News, 2017; Stockholm Center for Freedom, 2023). He says:

Nowadays, we have some kind of political situations. [...] Imagine] you are coming from Norway where most of the population is activists. And your husband is Turkish. Okay, you love each other, and you've been married more than three years, and your financial status is perfect, and you want to live in the lovely country of Turkey. However, the officer who is going to be reviewing your case is thinking, "Okay, this woman, why is she coming from Norway where she can make 60,000 euros per month? [...] She's going to come here, spread atheism through Turkish youth and poison their minds!" That's what I'm telling you; [public interest] is so vague (April 10, 2019).

Not all attorneys and consultants agreed, however, and many took great care to stress the naturalization process as impartial when it comes to demographic characteristics such as gender or national origin. They focus on the technical aspects of the application, whether the written requirements have been met, and minimize the role of any potential discretion. Erkan, a consultant in Istanbul who has handled more than 400 cases of naturalization through marriage, was asked if there were people who might face additional scrutiny or be questioned more carefully. He responds, "What you must know is that there are no prejudices against any countries. No one is denied or demographically blamed. No one says that Russians and Kyrgyz people are [bad]. The real causes are security and ethics." İlkin, a consultant in Antalya who handles around 100 cases of naturalization per year, largely agrees with Erkan, though he does allow for differing documentation requirements based on applicant's origin. He notes, "It doesn't matter from which country the person comes from. But there is something else regarding African countries; health is important. Health examinations are also important; they ask for such things if the person is from Africa, but most especially from South Africa." Even as these interviewees seem to stress the process as impartial, they implicitly accept the presence of biases (e.g., marriage-based naturalization applicants from certain places are judged a higher security risk and those from Africa a greater health risk).

The differing accounts by attorneys and consultants could indicate that bureaucratic discretion plays a larger role than recognized, particularly when it comes to questions of national security and/or the public interest. While other respondents know people who have been denied citizenship under this provision and can speculate as to the causes, it is the lived experience of "Inessa" that truly provides insight into how bureaucratic discretion in matters of national security and/or the public interest can be applied to marriage-based naturalization applicants.

Inessa, who was denied Turkish citizenship because she "represented a danger to the Turkish Republic" believes her denial was neither due to her contact with the Russian embassy

nor the petition she assisted with. Instead, Inessa believes a particular incident was the determining factor in her denial. In 2012, her organization helped organize a Russian cultural festival, and she was interviewed by a television reporter. Allegedly, this reporter asked her opinion about the lack of foreigners in the Turkish parliament in comparison to Germany, for example. Inessa says,

I said, “Well, of course, in principle, the Russian diaspora is young and sizeable, and I think that, probably, it would also be logical to have their interests represented by someone in the parliament.” He asked, “Would you like to become such a representative?” I said, “Why not?” That’s it. And after that, the rejection letter came (October 22, 2019).

She goes on to assert a pattern of application denials:

Now I hear more and more about failed applications. I can’t name you the reasons. But for myself, I made the conclusion that the more a person is assimilated into the Turkish environment... As an example, a woman starts speaking Turkish only, she converts to Islam ... Here is such a picture. I see that if a woman is busy with her family and children, there is a 99 percent chance she will receive her citizenship. And if she is politically or socially active, I think that it is already 100 percent clear that she will be denied (October 22, 2019).

Inessa highlights the intersection of the expected performance of gender for would-be Turkish women (family-oriented) and the national identity (expectations of assimilation and religious conversion) in naturalization applications. These unwritten, unofficial expectations, however, are not given as reasons for denial. As Başar—an attorney in Istanbul—notes, “You can’t find that kind of [reason] written. It is only as ‘against the public interest.’” As multiple scholars have noted, cross-border marriage may undermine the self-conception of the state, leading to the state’s interest in ensuring conformity with national identity and practices, which may be achieved through naturalization policies imposing formal integration or assimilation requirements (Alexander, 2013; Blackledge, 2016; Bonjour & de Hart, 2013; Brubaker, 1992; Castles, 2014; Cole, 2014; de Hart, 2006; de Leeuw & van Wichelen, 2012; Eggebo, 2010, 2013; Gutekunst, 2015; Kofman, 2004; Moon, 2015; Morrice, 2017; Muhleisen et al., 2012; Orgad, 2016; Pellander, 2015; Sherlock, 2009; Williams, 2010). Where there are no such formal requirements, the availability of bureaucratic discretion may create unofficial requirements under the guise of the public interest.

One of the many ways in which bureaucratic discretion may be applied during the naturalization process is in determining what is—and what is a threat to—national security and/or the public interest. These ill-defined terms include activities from terrorism to prostitution to not

living a lifestyle compatible with Turkish customs and are subject to change with the political climate. Differing accounts by attorneys and consultants who work with foreign nationals indicate different standards and/or requirements are in place in different areas as a matter of unofficial, unwritten policy. Moreover, because the bureaucracy views itself as the protector of the nation, as immigration becomes more politicized and public sentiment toward immigrants—particularly Syrians—becomes more negative, such unofficial ethnicized policies are likely to become more widespread. Bureaucratic officials have already demonstrated they may slow down or even halt naturalization applications, using discretion to require additional documentation as well as increasing the scope of activities viewed as against national security and/or the public interest.

9.6 Discussion

Bureaucratic officials determine not only whether applicants meet the technical qualifications for citizenship but also whether they “deserve” to become citizens, policing various aspects of applicants’ identities. This issue of deservingness is linked to whether applicants will help maintain the nation-state and/or provide resources for state self-reproduction; that is, whether applicants will engage in biological and ideological reproduction for the maintenance and benefit of the state (Marshall, 1963; Torpey, 2000). Officials’ policing of applicants’ identities may be seen as narrowing or filtering the “deserving” to those with strong connections to the national identity, thereby mitigating the identity challenges posed by marriage-based citizenship. This positions nation-building as an ongoing process, with naturalization as a mechanism for nation-building that rests on specific understandings and perpetuation of the national identity and gender roles. These understandings act much the same as the biases and stereotypes described by Lipsky (2010), which allow officials to routinize and simplify their work, allowing for easier differentiation between “worthy” applicants who properly perform these understandings and “unworthy” applicants who do not.

Because—as Lipsky (2010, p. 85) argues—the discretionary decisions made by bureaucratic officials as a routine part of their work often rely on their “occupational and personal biases, including the prejudices that blatantly and subtly permeate the society,” it is all too easy to reify attitudes that, collectively, amount to (unofficial) policies of bias favoring specific groups and/or discriminating against others. As such, it is worth considering when these collective

discretionary decisions add up to *de facto* agency policy. Lipsky (2010) argues the specific contexts in which street-level bureaucrats operate require the development of particular decision-making strategies; this context includes the political, economic, and socio-cultural environment in which the agency is situated (e.g., a street-level bureaucrat working in Istanbul would have different strategies than in Van or Gaziantep). If similar patterns of disparate outcomes are observed, particularly in economically, socially, or culturally different areas, it could be evidence that certain biased practices are sufficiently widespread to consider them *de facto* agency policy rather than (unofficial) policy for a single office location. This is also why I follow Evans (2016) in widening the focus of this research beyond the street-level to other bureaucratic officials exercising discretion in their decision-making and consider the wider context in which such officials are acting. I also distinguish between official policy as written policy, which may be formally legislated or found in employee handbooks, agency policy manuals, and the like, and *de facto* or unofficial policy as unwritten and comprised of institutionalized collective practices.

With all of this in mind, the question then becomes how Turkish citizenship policy—as practiced—demonstrates biases and whether these biases amount to unofficial citizenship policies. Lack of access to specific figures regarding successful and unsuccessful naturalization applications makes discerning larger patterns difficult.⁵⁰ What that said, survey and interview data indicate specific factors, particularly gender, ethnicity, and those related to performance of the national identity, have an impact on the naturalization application process. Moreover, requirements related to certain types of documentation as well as the performance of gender roles and the national identity appear sufficiently widespread as to constitute unofficial policies of citizenship eligibility, occurring throughout Turkey and reported by multiple sources. It is not clear, however, whether these are meant to slow or impede the process for all marriage-based naturalization applicants, making it more difficult for them, or rather these practices are the results of decisions to treat marriage-based applicants the same way as “regular” applicants. There is another possibility as

⁵⁰ Despite multiple requests from myself and the Migration Research Center and Prof. Dr. İçduygu at Koç University, the Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu (Turkish Statistical Institute, TÜİK) declined to provide additional statistical data on successful or unsuccessful marriage-based naturalization applicants. This may be a response to the growing politicization of immigration and citizenship in Turkey.

well. It is possible that all naturalization applicants are facing more difficulty in naturalizing as anti-immigrant sentiment in Turkey increases.

9.7 *Conclusion*

In this chapter, I examined specific themes from the literature review—gender, identity, and national security and/or the public interest—for salience in the Turkish context based on respondents’ experiences. It is clear that while bureaucratic discretion may be used to facilitate an application, it is more often used to hinder (even block) particular types of applicants from gaining membership in the nation-state by imposing extra-legal requirements tied to gender and/or identity under the guise of national security and/or the public interest. These extra-legal requirements may include additional documentation (e.g., related to health, marriage validity, etc.), but may also include Turkish language fluency, specific knowledge of Turkish culture, and engaging in Turkish cultural practices. These requirements may be enforced by any official during the process, from the initial application submission through the final interview with the Citizenship Application Review Commission.

Throughout this research, I argue that citizenship serves as a mechanism of the ongoing nation-building project, which also seeks to reinforce a specific understanding of the national identity (including prescribed gender roles). As a means of reinforcing this identity—or ensuring that marriage-based naturalization applicants conform to it—officials may require applicants to essentially perform their understanding of the Turkish national identity throughout the naturalization application process in both public and private practices. I also argue that there appear to be various unofficial policies in place making it more difficult for some to gain citizenship through marriage in Turkey, though whether this is the intended goal is unclear. Moreover, interviewees and respondents reported a variety of experiences with the marriage-based naturalization application process; this may be due to multiple reasons. This variation may indicate discretionary decision making in action, whether in an attempt to bring marriage-based applications more in line with “regular” naturalization applications or to give consideration to regional or contextual areas of greater concern (e.g., prostitution versus terrorism). On the other hand, the variation in respondents’ experiences may also reflect goal and process ambiguity within

the agency itself related to the evolving geopolitical context and increasing politicization of immigration and citizenship.



CHAPTER 10. CONCLUSION:

10.1 Marriage-based naturalization, informal naturalization policies, and the national identity

International marriage—marriage between those from different countries of origin—can bring with it a host of challenges. In addition to the usual legal and practical questions relating to the ceremony and embarking on married life, international marriage implicitly brings an outsider into a nation and often explicitly grants the potential for citizenship in the state of one's spouse. In many cases, this citizenship bypasses restrictions imposed on “regular” naturalization applicants (e.g., language fluency, cultural knowledge, financial status, etc.). As a result, international marriage poses challenges to the state and national identity in a way that other types of immigration do not, and the state may then respond with policies and/or practices meant to strengthen the national identity. In the case of marriage-based naturalization, some states have done so by explicitly ensuring these types of requirements apply to marriage-based naturalization applicants. In Turkey, however, while laws governing marriage-based naturalization are similar to those found elsewhere (e.g., the E.U., the U.S.A.), there are no explicit links to integration or nation building policies (e.g., language fluency, cultural knowledge), nor are there requirements that the marriage residence period must occur in Turkey. This makes Turkey somewhat of an outlier compared to policies seen in other states.

Recognizing the connection between nation-building policies, including those meant to strengthen the national identity, and marriage-based naturalization, this research has examined whether and how a specific understanding of the Turkish national identity impacts the process of marriage-based naturalization. To do so, I began by examining the Turkish identity itself. A national understanding of the Turkish identity as an ethno-religious one is deeply rooted in Turkish history and law. While it has been contested by secularism, immigration, multiculturalism, and Europeanization, I argue that the territorial, ethnic, and socio-cultural boundaries remain clear in the public imagination, as evidenced by AKP activation of this understanding in political discourse that is explicitly linked to Islamic populism as well as the increasing level of Islamization and

ethnonationalism in Turkey (see, for example, Çirakman, 2011; Gurini, 2018; A. Kaya, 2013b, 2015; N. Kaya, 2015; Ozsoy, 2022).

In order to gauge the impact of the Turkish identity on the experience of marriage-based naturalization, this dissertation research includes an online survey and interviews with foreigners married to Turkish citizens as well as attorneys and consultants who work with them. I first examined statistical data for information regarding the Turkish context and how online survey respondents and interviewees compare with the larger population. While there is no data regarding the overall population of those who have naturalized via marriage in Turkey, available data does indicate factors often linked to immigration to Turkey (e.g., states with larger populations of ethnic Turks (or ethnic Kurds), states with strong tourism links with Turkey, and/or states that were part of the former U.S.S.R.) are also linked with intermarriage. At the same time, publicly available data from TÜİK (2022b, 2022c) highlights differences between specific immigrant populations and intermarriage rates (as a rough comparison of marriage and population data), where populations that may be more recently established, less assimilated into Turkish society, and/or originate from states without strong connections to Turkey seem to have much lower rates of intermarriage. Compared to the Turkish population as a whole, online survey respondents (and their Turkish partners) tend to be more educated and better off financially. While online survey respondents are not representative of the population of marriage-based Turkish citizens, their responses provided invaluable information regarding the naturalization application process.

I used statistical and survey data to determine whether Turkey is experiencing the ethnicized and gendered trends observed in other marriage migration destination states, including an emphasis on ensuring the validity of applicant's marriage and conformance with the national identity. Online survey data indicate that respondents with significant differences between partners in age or level of education, who have very high (or low) levels of income or education, are from Eastern Europe, of specific religious backgrounds, or Kurdish-affiliated were less interested in naturalization to begin with, demonstrating an element of self-selection in the process. Women were also more likely to be interested in applying for Turkish citizenship than men. This is consistent with available data on marriage-based naturalization in Turkey, as in other contexts, which highlights indicates both that there are overarching patterns in citizenship acquisition

between host country contexts and that certain factors affecting self-selection may be host country-specific (e.g., which ethnic or religious groups are more/less likely to seek naturalization). Online survey data further indicates that those earning less than ₺10,001 are more likely to be interested in Turkish citizenship, and those making at least ₺2000 per month more likely to be successful. This may indicate that social class serves as a prerequisite to citizenship acquisition, even when income requirements are not specified. When it comes to the naturalization process itself, applicants with significant differences between partners in age or level of education, who have very high (or low) levels of income or education, and/or are “Russian”—factors associated with questioned marriage validity in Turkey and elsewhere—seem to experience greater difficulty with their naturalization process. Applicants of specific religious backgrounds (e.g., Orthodox Christian, other Christian) experienced similar difficulties, as evidenced by the higher percentages of such respondents reporting they are still waiting for a determination on their application. While Turkey may not match the specific demographics of trends experienced elsewhere (i.e., the particular population targeted by naturalization restrictions and/or extralegal requirements), it is clear that it is experiencing similar trends in marriage-based naturalization.

I also sought to determine applicants’ experiences with bureaucratic decision making and discretion during the process of marriage-based naturalization, whether discretionary decisions have led to informal policies of citizenship eligibility based on specific understandings of the Turkish national identity, and whether demographic factors impact applicants’ naturalization process. Absent access to bureaucratic officials and lacking official statistical data on naturalization rates, such an examination provides an alternative means of understanding potential areas of bias and trends in marriage-based naturalization. Moreover, centering applicants’ experiences with the naturalization process emphasizes the importance and impact of bureaucratic discretion in action. Documentation and interview requirements reported by online survey respondents were compared to the requirements listed in legislation and regulations. Interviews were conducted to gain more information about applicants’ experiences with the marriage-based naturalization process. My findings indicate the continued salience of the ethno-religious understanding of the Turkish national identity, which impacts the marriage-based naturalization process in multiple ways.

First, my findings indicate that there may be an element of self-selection prior to applying for naturalization; many individuals who do not conform to the ethno-religious Turkish identity appear to be self-selecting out of the naturalization process. Individuals who believe they may be marginalized because of their identity characteristics, particularly religious or ethnic identities that have been problematized throughout Turkish history (e.g., Jewish, Kurdish, Alevi) may opt out of citizenship, choosing instead to remain on long-term residence permits. Those choosing not to seek naturalization tend to be better situated economically and better educated, as well as born in 1980 or after. These demographic characteristics may mitigate economic and/or social pressure to naturalize. At the same time, while inconclusive, findings from the online survey suggest that a significant number of those who do not want Turkish citizenship feel that Turkish citizenship is “not worth it.” This could be due to reasons related to Turkish politics, the second-most frequently cited reason for not being interested in Turkish citizenship. While practical concerns, such as those related to the Turkish economy and/or labor market also played a role in the decision not to seek naturalization, respondents also expressed concerns about their rights. As highlighted in Chapter 4, growing Islamization and ethnonationalism, alongside the politicization of immigration, may make immigrants (and potential citizens) feel unwelcome, as expressed in their choice of citizenship.

Further, after an individual has applied for citizenship, survey and interview data indicate bureaucratic discretion in decision making may also utilize this understanding of the Turkish national identity to make it more difficult for some applicants to gain citizenship. I argue that a specific understanding of the Turkish identity, an ethno-religious one with specific perspectives on gender, is also evident in decisions related to who is permitted past this symbolic national boundary—who is permitted to become Turkish—despite legislation and/or regulation(s) in place. In part, this is because marriage-based naturalization intersects with and may challenge societal conceptions and national norms, particularly those related to family life and the national identity. In response to these challenges, the state may create or strengthen its moral boundaries, requiring (and investigating) conformance with national norms and the national identity.

Using online survey data and applicant interviews, this research has demonstrated that informal policies of eligibility for naturalization are applied inconsistently but frequently

throughout the provinces of Turkey, leading to disparate impacts on applicants. Moreover, interviews indicate these policies are often related to aspects of the Turkish identity and practices. According to attorneys and/or consultants who work with marriage-based naturalization applicants as well as applicants themselves, in addition to displaying at least some level of language fluency, applicants were commonly required to sing or recite the national anthem, answer questions “about Turkey and/or being a Turk,” including those about current events, Turkish politics, culture, family life (or plans to have children), and/or religious practices. While there is no evidence of official policies requiring marriage-based naturalization applicants to assimilate to or “perform” this Turkish identity through their use of and/or skill in Turkish knowledge, language, or culture—yet—these discretionary requirements reflect unofficial policies of citizenship eligibility roughly corresponding with the contours of the national identity and cultural norms, making marriage-based naturalization an unofficial part of the ongoing nation-building process. Taken together, survey and interview data further indicate ethnicized and gendered impacts of bureaucratic discretion during the naturalization process.

While variation in respondents’ experiences may derive from a number of sources—gatekeeping of the national identity, a desire to bring marriage-based naturalization closer in line with other types of naturalization and the ongoing nation-building project, or even goal and process ambiguity within the agency—it is also clear that bureaucratic discretion is often being used to hinder, even block certain applicants from citizenship by imposing extra-legal requirements tied to gender and identity under the guise of national security and/or the public interest.

10.2 Implications

These research findings suggest a few larger implications. To begin, it has been reported that immigration and naturalization have become more politicized in Turkey over the past decade (Ozsoy, 2022; Tremblay, 2017; Uras, 2022). Taking the overall political context into account, this research demonstrates how bureaucratic discretion functions in practice, despite a centralized, top-down administrative structure. Increasing unofficial requirements for marriage-based naturalization may reflect a strategy for bureaucratic officials to simplify their work and/or conform to the anti-immigrant environment (Lipsky, 2010). Integrating marriage-based naturalization, even unofficially, into the ongoing nation-building project may also represent a

retrenchment of or a desire to return to traditional (legal and socio-cultural) understandings of the Turkish identity as an ethno-religious one with specific socio-cultural practices. As a political goal, strengthening the nation-building project and this understanding of the Turkish identity may also be linked to growing Islamization and ethnonationalism in Turkey under the AKP (Coşar & Yeğenoğlu, 2011; A. Kaya, 2015; Kirişci & Sloat, 2019; Yilmaz, 2017).

Whether stemming from officials' work strategies, a response to overt political goals, or even goal ambiguity within the agency, the current application of bureaucratic discretion in naturalization is part of the weakening of state institutions, particularly the rule of law, reported by Kakışım (2018) and Kirişci and Sloat (2019). In the shorter term, the strengthening or continuation of these trends will have an effect on who is allowed to naturalize. In their dual role as *de facto* policy makers and as gatekeepers of the symbolic boundary of the state—absent official instruction to the contrary—bureaucratic officials are perhaps particularly susceptible to heightened politicization of naturalization and anti-immigrant sentiment; these factors establish the context in which officials work, provide clues to the direction of future policy making, and bestow greater importance on officials' work in maintaining or reinforcing the boundaries of citizenship. To this end, bureaucratic officials determine who meets citizenship requirements and (re)define what is and is not in the public interest. In the case of Turkey, online survey respondents and interviewees report official concern or focus (i.e., documentation demands, investigative/police research, and/or interview questions) on whether the marriage-based naturalization applicant is a good neighbor, applicants' family plans or practices, and what their religious practices entail, including whether they engage in "missionary activity." The growing securitization of marriage-based (and other) immigration and naturalization, in which applicants are increasingly cast as potential threats to the Turkish state and society, also allows for greater flexibility in how the public interest standard is applied. In current practice, this has meant that applicants need to essentially perform their understanding of the Turkish identity throughout the application process, demonstrating fluency in the language and culture as a means of lessening any "threat" they pose.

Provided that the trends observed by this research continue, there are short term and longer term implications. In the near term, for example, an acceptable performance of the Turkish identity

could become more universally seen as a necessary component of obtaining citizenship. It could even become a matter of official policy to require marriage-based naturalization applicants to conform with specific socio-cultural behaviors and attitudes; such policies are in place elsewhere for these would-be citizens (Alexander, 2013; Blackledge, 2016; Bonjour & de Hart, 2013; Fernandez, 2013). Officials' understanding of what constitutes a threat to the public interest may also expand to include a wide range of political, social, and cultural behaviors—including those not necessarily illegal—to justify prohibiting access to citizenship. Even as marriage-based naturalization becomes more difficult, there could be an increase in the number of applicants. Because there is not yet an official integration requirement for marriage-based naturalization applicants, it may remain the naturalization pathway of choice for those who might not otherwise be able to qualify for citizenship. Moreover, recent restrictions on where foreigners may live, shutting non-citizens out of thousands of neighborhoods, may provide further incentive for residents to naturalize rather than renew a family residence permit.

In the longer term, these trends could have further impacts in a number of areas, particularly the political economy and international relations. First, Turkey has become home to a number of diasporas that have maintained close family and economic links with their countries of origin. Anti-immigration sentiment expressed through limiting naturalization is bound to affect these ties and the capital that results from them, whether in terms of reduced immigration or decreased foreign direct investment stemming from a less welcoming attitude toward foreigners. Moreover, as a general rule, fewer international investments are made in states with weaker rule of law, particularly in a context of growing nationalism, as such investments are seen as riskier.

10.3 Limitations

While the survey and interview findings are interesting, there are important limitations to the conclusions that can be drawn. First, the availability of statistical data is limited. Specifically, the lack of detailed data regarding naturalization rates and citizenship denial rates limits the extent to which statistical analyses can be performed. Such data regarding would-be citizens (and denied applicants) would be invaluable in determining whether larger patterns exist regarding the impact of specific understandings of the Turkish national identity on naturalization. Unfortunately, TÜİK has declined requests to provide this data. Similarly, the explanatory value of the online survey is

limited with regard to the larger population. Many of the respondents were from Western Europe, particularly the U.K., and respondents were overwhelmingly female. While I have previously noted that the actual population of naturalized foreign spouses is not known, the number of those naturalizing (2000-2011) compared to the number of foreigners who married Turks (2009-2021) provide some indication of potential applicants, and it is evident that the online survey is not representative of the population as a whole. With that in mind, analysis of survey data and trends are only intended to apply to survey respondents and cannot be generalized to the larger population.

By far, the biggest limitation to this research is the lack of interviews with bureaucratic officials. Input from officials could have provided additional information regarding specific practices, standard operating procedures (and changes in these over time), as well as discussion regarding different ways discretion might be applied throughout the naturalization application process. Unfortunately, however, despite repeated attempts that included emails (in Turkish), phone calls to numbers that appeared to be assigned to officials, and phone calls to the migration helpline, I was unable to make email or telephone contact with any bureaucratic officials involved in migration decision making. Moreover, due to security concerns following the 2016 attempted coup, buildings housing bureaucratic officials were closed to the public without an appointment, and appointments were not accepted for foreigners unless the residence card was about to expire. Attempts to speak with staff while submitting renewal paperwork were not successful.

Despite these limitations, however, this study provides a novel perspective on the ways in which national understanding of the Turkish identity can impact the naturalization application process. By examining the experiences of naturalization applicants (micro) and consultants who work with a number of migrants (meso), this research is a multi-level exploration of factors affecting the naturalization process itself, going beyond asking who chooses to naturalize and why and asking, instead, what barriers or challenges naturalization applicants face in a context where ethno-religious identity has governed naturalization since the inception of the state. This is really only possible to ask in the case of marriage-based citizenship acquisition as the marriage itself forms the basis to acquire citizenship. While other applicants may be denied for any number of reasons, it is in examining marriage-based applicants in particular that we can explore the impact of identity apart from other potentially mitigating factors.

10.4 Recommendations for future research

This research has focused on the experiences of marriage-based naturalization applicants, and the findings indicate the existence of biases in the naturalization process that have gendered and ethnicized impacts. The implications of the findings, moreover, highlight the importance of marriage-based naturalization as a litmus test for who is able to become part of a nation-state. With the limitations of this research in mind, there are directions future research could take that could further illuminate the impact of these unofficial policies of citizenship eligibility. First, access to and analysis of statistical data related to successful and unsuccessful naturalization applications would greatly broaden the scope of this research, allowing for a clearer determination of underlying patterns that may be present, including any systemic biases that may exist. This becomes ever more important in light of growing anti-immigrant sentiment and reported difficulties in immigration-related administrative processes (see, for example, Mourenza, 2023; Uras, 2022). An additional avenue for future research that could be quite fruitful is the specific examination of the immigration and naturalization experiences of North-South immigrants in Turkey vis-à-vis the experiences of those from the Global South. In particular, the experience of Syrians seeking marriage-based naturalization could be particularly illuminating given their unique position in Turkey. This area is touched upon but not specifically considered by this research, and could retain a novel, bottom-up approach. Finally, future research could also expand into the decision-making processes of bureaucratic officials in making discretionary decisions related to naturalization. Such research could help determine the root cause(s) of biases described in this research, which could be invaluable if and when there is political will to ameliorate the political, economic, and cultural implications of continuing trends in biased citizenship access.

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APPENDIX A: SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

Survey invitations were posted multiple times in the following Facebook groups / V.K. communities from March 2019 to December 2019. Where allowed, invitations were posted monthly. Different groups have different posting rules, affecting the frequency of posts. Because many of these groups have similar names, URLs have been included for reference.

Website	Group / community name	Posting language(s)
Facebook	Expats of Turkey, lets help each other out https://www.facebook.com/groups/136448146550933/	English
Facebook	Turkish-Russian-Ukraine Dating-Marriage https://www.facebook.com/groups/turkishsite/	Turkish & Russian
Facebook	ISAT: International Students Association in Turkey https://www.facebook.com/groups/InternationalSAT/	English & Turkish
Facebook	Foreigners in Istanbul https://www.facebook.com/groups/foristanbul/	English & Turkish
Facebook	Foreigners who live in Istanbul https://www.facebook.com/groups/foreignerswholiveinistanbul/	English & Turkish
Facebook	Istanbul Expat Center https://www.facebook.com/groups/288523151622/	English & Turkish

Website	Group / community name	Posting language(s)
Facebook	International Community of Koç University https://www.facebook.com/groups/internationalkustudent/	English
Facebook	Expats & Foreigners in Turkey™ https://www.facebook.com/groups/americansinistanbul/	English & Turkish
Facebook	الجمالية العربية في تركيا انقر TR [the Arab Community in Turkey] https://www.facebook.com/groups/Family.Faceb0ok/	Arabic & Turkish
Facebook	الجمالية العربية والاسلامية في تركيا - Türkiye'de Arap ve Müslüman toplum [The Arab and Muslim Community in Turkey] https://www.facebook.com/groups/1890505231270862/	Arabic & Turkish
Facebook	Русский Авсаллар [Russian Avsallar] https://www.facebook.com/groups/Avsallar.biz/	Turkish & Russian
Facebook	تجارة من تركيا للدول العربية [Trade from Turkey to Arab Countries] https://www.facebook.com/groups/1350476154993924/	Arabic & Turkish
Facebook	الجمالية الجزائرية والمغربية العربية في تركيا واوربا عامة dz [Algerian Community and Maghreb Arabs in Turkey] https://www.facebook.com/groups/711528645847064/	Arabic & Turkish
Facebook	Bodrum Echo Community https://www.facebook.com/groups/BodrumEchoCommunity/	English

Website	Group / community name	Posting language(s)
Facebook	الجاليه العربيه في تركيا انقره وقونيا [The Arab Community in Turkey, Ankara and Konya] https://www.facebook.com/groups/538369302968697/	Arabic & Turkish
Facebook	Russkie V Stambule/ Russkogovoryashie [Russians In Istanbul / Russian Speakers] https://www.facebook.com/groups/461333853921215/	Russian & Turkish
Facebook	РУССКИЕ В СТАМБУЛЕ [Russians in Istanbul] https://www.facebook.com/groups/163218764054293/	Russian
Facebook	Русские проживающие в Турции [Russians living in Turkey] https://www.facebook.com/groups/449779415189923/	Russian
Facebook	Ankara Expat Life https://www.facebook.com/groups/Ankaraexpatlif/	English
Facebook	Foreigners in Istanbul https://www.facebook.com/groups/foreignerinistanbul/	English
Facebook	Foreigners in Istanbul https://www.facebook.com/groups/1519542708275652/	English
Facebook	Foreigners Living in Izmir / Expats in İzmir https://www.facebook.com/groups/foreignersizmir/	English
Facebook	Foreigners living in Istanbul - group by www.istexpats.com	English

Website	Group / community name	Posting language(s)
	https://www.facebook.com/groups/foreignerslivinginistanbul/	
Facebook	الجالية العربية في تركيا [Arab community in Turkey] https://www.facebook.com/groups/923161234445927/	Arabic & Turkish
Facebook	Göç Araştırmacıları Platformu [Migration Researchers Platform] https://www.facebook.com/groups/1714193008816225/	Turkish & English
Facebook	Русские эмигранты в Турции/Russian emigrant's in Turkey https://www.facebook.com/groups/RussianslivinginIstanbul/	Russian, Turkish & English
Facebook	Expats in istanbul - Istanbul Expats - Expatriates of Istanbul https://www.facebook.com/groups/istanbulexpats/	English
Facebook	İstanbul Expats & Internationals Group https://www.facebook.com/groups/istanbulexpatsinternationals/	English
Facebook	Foreigners in Antalya https://www.facebook.com/groups/ForeignersInAntalya/	English
Facebook	الجالية العربية في تركيا [Arab community in Turkey] https://www.facebook.com/groups/libyangrup.tr/	Arabic & Turkish
Facebook	Istanbul English Speaking Foreigners	English

Website	Group / community name	Posting language(s)
	https://www.facebook.com/groups/ISTANBULENGLISHSPEAKERS/	
Facebook	Русский и Турецкий.....Слова.....О жизни [Russian and Turkish Words About Life] https://www.facebook.com/groups/ARFKAYA/	Turkish & Russian
Facebook	Foreign Women of Istanbul https://www.facebook.com/groups/IstanbulExpatriateWomen/	English
Facebook	الجالية العربية في انقرة – تركيا [Arab Community in Ankara, Turkey] https://www.facebook.com/groups/1721482534767373/	Arabic & Turkish
Facebook	Rusça Öğreniyoruz - Русский Язык для Всех [Russian Language for All] https://www.facebook.com/groups/1466574863560792/	Turkish & Russian
Facebook	زواج المغتربين السوريين في تركيا والدول العربية [Marriage of Syrian Expatriates in Turkey and Arab Countries] https://www.facebook.com/groups/710376129118346/	Arabic & Turkish
VK.com	Турция для друзей - Turkey for friends https://vk.com/turkeyforfriends	Russian
Facebook	Latvieši Turcijā [Latvians in Turkey] https://www.facebook.com/groups/latviesiturcija/	Latvian
Facebook	Istanbul Expat Community https://www.facebook.com/groups/istexpats/	English

Website	Group / community name	Posting language(s)
Facebook	Foreigners living in Istanbul https://www.facebook.com/foreignerslivinginistanbul/	English
Facebook	Istanbul Expats https://www.facebook.com/IstanbulExpats/	English
VK.com	Gönül Almak/Турция-Turkey-Türkiye/Красивые посты https://vk.com/turklove	Russian & Turkish
VK.com	Турция Türkiye Turkey https://vk.com/turkeylife	Russian & Turkish
VK.com	Турция 🇹🇷 Turkey https://vk.com/turtsia	Russian
VK.com	Турция ВКонтакте https://vk.com/tr_vk	Russian
VK.com	Турция Turkey Discussion board https://vk.com/turkey_otzivi	Russian
VK.com	ТУРЦИЯ https://vk.com/turkiyemiz	Russian

Website	Group / community name	Posting language(s)
VK.com	Русскоязычные мусульмане в Турции [Russian Speaking Muslims in Turkey] Discussion board https://vk.com/muslims_in_turkey	Russian
VK.com	Русская Турция Türkiye Ruslar [Russian Turkey] https://vk.com/russianturkey	Russian & Turkish
Facebook	Русские мамы в Стамбуле [Russian mothers in Istanbul] https://www.facebook.com/groups/384896371660833/	Russian & Turkish
Facebook	وظائف وخدمات الجالية العربية في اسطنبول_تركيا [Jobs and Arab Community Services in Istanbul, Turkey] https://www.facebook.com/groups/935869523248873/	Arabic & Turkish
Facebook	Русский-турецкий язык - Rusca-Türkçe Dili [Russian-Turkish Language] https://www.facebook.com/groups/217219655748703/	Turkish & Russian
Facebook	الجالية العربية في تركيا [Arab community in Turkey] https://www.facebook.com/groups/1929708117271491/	Arabic & Turkish
Facebook	الجمالية العربية في تركيا ♥ [The Arab Community in Turkey] https://www.facebook.com/groups/1445413095767417/	Arabic & Turkish
Facebook	Expat Women in Turkey https://www.facebook.com/expatwomeninturkey/	English

APPENDIX B: SURVEY QUESTIONS

Naturalized citizenship and cross-border marriage migration: The case of Turkey⁵¹

Q1.1 My name is Judith Woods; I am a researcher at Koç University and my supervisor is Dr. Ahmet İcduygu. My dissertation focuses on people who apply for citizenship in Turkey through marriage. I am specifically researching the barriers or challenges that may occur during the application process. For this project, I want to ask you some questions about your background, your relationship and the process of getting Turkish citizenship. Your information will not be shared outside of this project and your answers are confidential.

_____ Cancel

_____ Continue

Skip To: End of Survey If My name is Judith Woods; I am a researcher at Koç University and my supervisor is Dr. Ahmet İcduygu... = Cancel

Q1.2 This survey will take ten to fifteen minutes. There should not be any risks associated with your participation, but you have the right to stop the survey at any time. Information you provide is confidential and your responses will be anonymous. Your name and any identifying details will be changed in any reports using this survey. If you agree to participate, please click “begin” to be taken to the survey. This research has been reviewed and approved by the Ethics Board of Koç University. If you have any further questions or concerns about this study, please contact Judith Woods, PhD candidate (jwoods15@ku.edu.tr) or Dr. Ahmet İcduygu, Supervisor (aicduygu@ku.edu.tr)

_____ Cancel

_____ Begin

Skip To: End of Survey If This survey will take ten to fifteen minutes. There should not be any risks associated with your... = Cancel

Q2.1 First, I'm going to ask you some demographic questions.

Q2.2 What is your year of birth?

⁵¹ Formatting has been modified from the online version to conserve space

Q2.3 What country are you originally from?

Q2.4 What is your level of education?

_____ Less than high school (ISCED 0-2 / UK 1)

_____ High school graduate (ISCED 3 / UK 2)

_____ Some college / 2-year degree / vocational certificate (ISCED 4-5, UK 3-5)

_____ 4 year degree (ISCED 6 / UK 6)

_____ Professional degree / Master's degree (ISCED 7 / UK 7)

_____ Doctorate (ISCED 8 / UK 8)

Q2.5 What is your level of Turkish language skill?

_____ None / A little Turkish

_____ Intermediate

_____ I can manage simple

_____ Advanced

conversations

_____ Fluent

Display This Question:

If What is your level of Turkish language skill? [anything other than] I do not speak or understand Turkish

Q2.6 How did you learn to speak or understand Turkish? Check all that apply.

_____ From my partner

_____ It is my mother tongue

_____ Turkish language courses

_____ Other (please specify)

_____ Private instruction

_____ During an exchange program in
Turkey

Display This Question:

If What is your level of Turkish language skill? [anything other than]= I do not speak or understand Turkish

And How did you learn to speak or understand Turkish (check all that apply)? [anything other than]!= It is my mother tongue

Q2.7 Where have you studied Turkish?

- ☐ Only in my home country
 ☐ Other (please specify)
- ☐ Only in Turkey
 ☐
- ☐ Both in my home country and Turkey

Q2.8 What other languages do you speak? Please check all that apply.

	<i>A little</i>	<i>Simple conversation</i>	<i>Intermediate</i>	<i>Advanced</i>	<i>Fluent</i>
<i>English</i>	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
<i>Russian</i>	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
<i>Arabic</i>	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
<i>Kurdish</i>	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
<i>German</i>	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
<i>Other (please specify)</i>	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
<i>Other (please specify)</i>	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q2.9 What is your sex?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

Q2.10 What is your religious background?

Christian

- ☐ Catholic
- ☐ Protestant
- ☐ Orthodox
- ☐ Other

Muslim

- ☐ Sunni
- ☐ Shia
- ☐ Other

Other

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| ☐ Buddhist | ☐ Other |
| ☐ Hindu | ☐ None |
| ☐ Sikh | ☐ Prefer not to say |
| ☐ Jewish | |

Q2.11 In Turkey, what city do you live in?

Q2.12 Considering the last six months and the income (e.g. salary, rent, pension, other business income, etc.) of all family members, which of the following groups is closest to your average total monthly household income [in Turkish lira]?

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Less than 2000 TL per month | ☐ 7001-10000 TL per month |
| ☐ 2000 to 4000 TL per month | ☐ 10001-20000 TL per month |
| ☐ 4001-7000 TL per month | ☐ More than 20000 TL per month |

Q3.1 Now I'm going to ask you some questions about your relationship with your Turkish partner.

Q3.2 What is your partner's year of birth?

Q3.3 What is your partner's level of education?

- ☐ Less than high school (ISCED 0-2 / UK 1)
- ☐ High school graduate (ISCED 3 / UK 2)
- ☐ Some college / 2-year degree / vocational certificate (ISCED 4-5, UK 3-5)
- ☐ 4-year degree (ISCED 6 / UK 6)
- ☐ Professional degree / Master's degree (ISCED 7 / UK 7)
- ☐ Doctorate (ISCED 8 / UK 8)

Q3.4 Do you live with your Turkish partner?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q3.5 What is your relationship status with your Turkish partner?

- ☐ Engaged
 ☐ Other (please specify)
- ☐ Married

- ☐ Divorced

Display This Question:

If What is your relationship status with your Turkish partner? = Married

Q3.6 What year did you marry your Turkish partner?

Q3.7 How did you meet your partner?

- ☐ Friends / family
 ☐ Dating agency / website
- ☐ School / university
 ☐ Other (please specify)
- ☐ Work

- ☐ Internet

Q3.8 When did you meet your Turkish partner (year)?

Q3.9 Did you meet your Turkish partner in Turkey or abroad?

- ☐ Turkey
- ☐ Abroad (where?)

Q4.1 Now, I'm going to ask some questions about your migration to Turkey and citizenship.

Q4.2 How long have you lived in Turkey?

- ☐ Less than 1 year
 ☐ 5-10 years
- ☐ 1-3 years
 ☐ 10-20 years
- ☐ 3-5 years
 ☐ 20+ years

Q4.3 Why did you move to Turkey?

☐ Education
 ☐ Other (please specify) _____
☐ Work _____
☐ Marriage / relationship

Q4.4 Do you have Turkish citizenship?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Display This Question:

If Do you have Turkish citizenship? = Yes

Q4.5 Did you receive your Turkish citizenship because of your marriage?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Display This Question:

If Do you have Turkish citizenship? = Yes

And Did you receive your Turkish citizenship because of your marriage? = Yes

Q4.6 When did you apply for Turkish citizenship? _____

Display This Question:

If Do you have Turkish citizenship? = Yes

And Did you receive your Turkish citizenship because of your marriage? = Yes

Q4.7 How long did the citizenship application process take (including interviews, verifying information) after you submitted your application?

☐ Less than 6 months
 ☐ More than 2 years
☐ 6 months - 1 year
 ☐ I don't know / don't remember
☐ 1-2 years

Display This Question:

If Do you have Turkish citizenship? = Yes

And Did you receive your Turkish citizenship because of your marriage? = Yes

Q4.8 How easy or difficult was the process of obtaining Turkish citizenship?

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Extremely easy | ☐ Somewhat difficult |
| ☐ Somewhat easy | ☐ Extremely difficult |
| ☐ Neither easy nor difficult | ☐ I don't know / don't remember |

Display This Question:

If Do you have Turkish citizenship? = Yes

And Did you receive your Turkish citizenship because of your marriage? = Yes

Q4.9 When you applied for citizenship, was the process clear to you in terms of what steps you would need to take and the information you would need to provide?

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Extremely clear | ☐ Somewhat unclear |
| ☐ Somewhat clear | ☐ Extremely unclear |
| ☐ Neither clear nor unclear | ☐ I don't know / don't remember |

Display This Question:

If Do you have Turkish citizenship? = Yes

And Did you receive your Turkish citizenship because of your marriage? = Yes

Q4.10 Compared to other people you know who have applied for citizenship, how difficult was your application process?

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Much easier | ☐ More difficult |
| ☐ Easier | ☐ Much more difficult |
| ☐ Neither easier nor more difficult | ☐ I don't know / don't remember |

Display This Question:

If Do you have Turkish citizenship? = Yes

And Did you receive your Turkish citizenship because of your marriage? = Yes

Q4.11 Compared to other people you know who have applied for citizenship, how long did your application process take?

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Much shorter | ☐ A little longer |
| ☐ A little shorter | ☐ Much longer |
| ☐ About the same amount of time | ☐ I don't know / don't remember |

Display This Question:

If Do you have Turkish citizenship? = Yes

And Did you receive your Turkish citizenship because of your marriage? = Yes

Q4.12 What kinds of information did you have to provide during the citizenship application process (check all that apply)?

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Marriage certificate | ☐ An interview |
| ☐ Proof of prior divorce | ☐ Proof of Turkish language skill |
| ☐ Proof of residence | ☐ Other (please specify) |
| ☐ Proof your relationship is valid (not fake) | ☐ I don't know / don't remember |
| ☐ Home rental / ownership contract | |

Display This Question:

If What kinds of information did you have to provide during the citizenship application process (che... = Proof your relationship is valid (not fake)

Q4.13 What kinds of information did you have to provide to prove the validity of your relationship (check all that apply)?

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Photos of you together as a couple | ☐ Information about partner's daily habits |
| ☐ Home rental / ownership contract with both names | ☐ Other (please specify) |
| ☐ Communication records (phone, message records, letters, etc.) | ☐ I don't know / don't remember |

Display This Question:

If What kinds of information did you have to provide during the citizenship application process (che... = An interview

Q4.14 Who was interviewed as part of the application process (check all that apply)?

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Me | ☐ My friends |
| ☐ My partner | ☐ Other (please specify) |
| ☐ My partner's family | |
| ☐ My family | ☐ I don't know / don't remember |
| ☐ My partner's friends | |

Display This Question:

If Do you have Turkish citizenship? = No

Q4.15 Are you interested in obtaining Turkish citizenship?

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Yes, I have already applied | ☐ I applied but was denied |
| ☐ Yes, but I have not applied yet | |

_____ No, I am not interested in
obtaining Turkish citizenship

Display This Question:

If Are you interested in obtaining Turkish citizenship? = Yes, I have already applied

Q4.16 When did you apply for Turkish citizenship?

Display This Question:

If Are you interested in obtaining Turkish citizenship? = No, I am not interested in obtaining Turkish citizenship

Q4.17 I am not interested in applying for Turkish citizenship because (check all that apply)

_____ It is too expensive	_____ Reasons related to Turkish
_____ I would have to give up my	politics
_____ citizenship	_____ Reasons related to Turkish
_____ It isn't worth it to me	economy
_____ It is too difficult	_____ Other (please specify)

Q4.18 Does your Turkish partner have / plan to get citizenship from your home country?

_____ Yes, she or he has applied or received citizenship from my home country

_____ Yes, she or he plans to apply for citizenship from my home country

_____ No, she or he does not plan to apply for citizenship from my home country

_____ Other (please specify)

Display This Question:

If Does your Turkish partner have / plan to get citizenship from your home country? = No, she or he does not plan to apply for citizenship from my home country

Q4.19 My partner does not plan to apply for citizenship from my home country because (check all that apply)

- ☐ Turkey's citizenship is better
- ☐ She or he isn't eligible
- ☐ My home country does not allow dual citizenship
- ☐ Too expensive
- ☐ Too difficult
- ☐ She or he does not want it due to political reasons related to Turkey
- ☐ She or he does not want it due to political reasons related to my home country
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Q5.1 Are you interested in participating in further interviews or focus groups for this research?

- ☐ Yes, I am interested in participating in further interviews or focus groups
- ☐ No, I am NOT interested in participating in further interviews or focus groups

Display This Question:

If Are you interested in participating in further interviews or focus groups for this research? = Yes, I am interested in participating in further interviews or focus groups

Q5.2 Please provide your name and email address

APPENDIX C: IRB APPROVAL

Rumelifeneri Yolu Sarıyer 34450 İstanbul T: 0212 338 10 00 F: 0212 338 12 05 www.ku.edu.tr



**KOÇ
ÜNİVERSİTESİ**

ETİK KURUL KARARI

Toplantı Tarihi:	10.12.2018
Karar No:	2018.349.IRB3.248
Sorumlu Araştırmacı:	Judith Lynn Woods
Araştırma Başlığı:	Naturalized citizenship and cross-border marriage migration: The case of Turkey
Başlangıç tarihi:	12.12.2018
Etik Kurul izninin süresi:	1 yıl (Uzatma hakkı mevcut olarak)

Koç Üniversitesi Etik Kurulu'na değerlendirilmek üzere başvuruda bulunduğunuz yukarıda künyesi yazılı projenizin başvuru dosyası ve ilgili belgeleri, "Sosyal Bilimler Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Sekreteryası" tarafından değerlendirilmiş ve Üniversite Akademik Kurulu'nun 05.04.2012 tarih ve 04 Nolu kararıyla birinci düzey inceleme yapılmasına karar verilmiştir. Yapılan inceleme sonucunda etik ve bilimsel açıdan çalışmanın gerçekleştirilmesi uygun bulunmuştur.

Notlar:

- Araştırma başlangıç tarihinin 6 aydan daha fazla gecikmesi durumunda Etik Kurul'a başvurularak tarihlerin değiştirilmesi gereklidir.
- Etik Kurul incelemesi ve onayı olmadan bu araştırmada kullanılan prosedürler, formlar ya da protokollerde herhangi bir değişiklik yapılamaz.
- Etik bakımdan sorun çıkması ya da şüpheli bir olay/beklenmeyen etki görülmesi durumunda derhal etik kurul bilgilendirilmelidir.
- Araştırmanın gerçekleştirileceği birimlerin yöneticilerinden de ayrıca izin alınması gerekli olabilir.

Saygılarımla,

[Redacted Signature]

Hakan S. Orer
Başkan

APPENDIX D: CHAPTER 5 ADDITIONAL TABLES AND FIGURES

Table D-1: Immigrants married to Turks vs. immigrant populations (total 2009-2021)

Source: TUIK (2022b, 2022c)

Citizenship	Marriage total (Female)	Marriage total (Male)	Total migrants	Total migrants (Female)	Total migrants (Male)	Marriage % (Female)	Marriage % (Male)
Afghanistan	1,052	1,251	183,567	76,942	106,625	1.37%	1.17%
Albania	288	101	2,884	1,643	1,241	17.53%	8.14%
Algeria	2,259	32	10,698	6,197	4,501	36.45%	0.71%
Angola			1,463	545	918	0.00%	0.00%
Argentina			265	144	121	0.00%	0.00%
Armenia	460		1,695	1,334	361	34.48%	0.00%
Australia		204	1,202	544	658	0.00%	31.00%
Austria	5,594	4,160	19,900	9,134	10,766	61.24%	38.64%
Azerbaijan	25,046	1,304	68,562	37,072	31,490	67.56%	4.14%
Bahrain			506	249	257	0.00%	0.00%
Bangladesh			1,598	405	1,193	0.00%	0.00%
Belarus	2,479		3,873	3,014	859	82.25%	0.00%
Belgium	237	261	1,798	896	902	26.45%	28.94%
Benin			266	40	226	0.00%	0.00%
Bosnia & Herzegovina	422		1,425	892	533	47.31%	0.00%
Brazil	207		1,197	743	454	27.86%	0.00%

Table D-1: Immigrants married to Turks vs. immigrant populations (total 2009-2021)

Source: TUIK (2022b, 2022c)

Citizenship	Marriage total (Female)	Marriage total (Male)	Total migrants	Total migrants (Female)	Total migrants (Male)	Marriage % (Female)	Marriage % (Male)
Bulgaria	7,479	973	15,426	8,892	6,534	84.11%	14.89%
Burkina Faso			453	101	352	0.00%	0.00%
Burundi			268	84	184	0.00%	0.00%
Cameroon			2,100	758	1,342	0.00%	0.00%
Canada	51	240	3,705	1,703	2,002	2.99%	11.99%
Chad			2,100	405	1,695	0.00%	0.00%
China	1,014	104	20,486	8,521	11,965	11.90%	0.87%
Colombia			794	486	308	0.00%	0.00%
Comoros			468	174	294	0.00%	0.00%
Congo			381	124	257	0.00%	0.00%
Côte d'Ivoire			889	301	588	0.00%	0.00%
Croatia			262	123	139	0.00%	0.00%
Cuba			374	232	142	0.00%	0.00%
Czechia			420	271	149	0.00%	0.00%
Democratic Republic of the Congo			1,316	630	686	0.00%	0.00%
Denmark	267	374	3,552	1,502	2,050	17.78%	18.24%
Djibouti			2,949	1,372	1,577	0.00%	0.00%
Dominica			312	113	199	0.00%	0.00%

Table D-1: Immigrants married to Turks vs. immigrant populations (total 2009-2021)

Source: TUIK (2022b, 2022c)

Citizenship	Marriage total (Female)	Marriage total (Male)	Total migrants	Total migrants (Female)	Total migrants (Male)	Marriage % (Female)	Marriage % (Male)
Dominican Republic			193	141	52	0.00%	0.00%
Egypt	104	581	34,162	14,507	19,655	0.72%	2.96%
Eritrea			1,254	623	631	0.00%	0.00%
Estonia			217	156	61	0.00%	0.00%
Ethiopia			6,633	3,305	3,328	0.00%	0.00%
Finland	630	64	844	494	350	127.53%	18.29%
France	1,575	995	4,294	2,052	2,242	76.75%	44.38%
Gabon			533	254	279	0.00%	0.00%
Gambia			943	228	715	0.00%	0.00%
Georgia	7,244	111	19,276	15,412	3,864	47.00%	2.87%
Germany	32,833	17,613	102,592	52,389	50,203	62.67%	35.08%
Ghana			1,334	355	979	0.00%	0.00%
Greece	1,034	710	12,569	6,468	6,101	15.99%	11.64%
Guinea			1,070	237	833	0.00%	0.00%
Guinea-Bissau			253	81	172	0.00%	0.00%
Haiti			3,191	925	2,266	0.00%	0.00%
Hungary	188	21	506	338	168	55.62%	12.50%
India		156	3,092	880	2,212	0.00%	7.05%
Indonesia	1,647		10,219	7,104	3,115	23.18%	0.00%

Table D-1: Immigrants married to Turks vs. immigrant populations (total 2009-2021)

Source: TUIK (2022b, 2022c)

Citizenship	Marriage total (Female)	Marriage total (Male)	Total migrants	Total migrants (Female)	Total migrants (Male)	Marriage % (Female)	Marriage % (Male)
Iran	3,928	1,072	128,883	64,136	64,747	6.12%	1.66%
Iraq	2,444	1,039	322,015	155,340	166,675	1.57%	0.62%
Ireland		25	789	419	370	0.00%	6.76%
Israel			1,547	707	840	0.00%	0.00%
Italy	40	851	2,386	912	1,474	4.39%	57.73%
Japan	490		1,507	831	676	58.97%	0.00%
Jordan	34	242	23,656	9,679	13,977	0.35%	1.73%
Kazakhstan	5,726	29	39,454	23,527	15,927	24.34%	0.18%
Kenya			1,774	860	914	0.00%	0.00%
Kosovo	479	106	1,946	1,121	825	42.73%	12.85%
Kuwait			5,498	2,164	3,334	0.00%	0.00%
Kyrgyzstan	7,133	33	26,541	19,440	7,101	36.69%	0.46%
Latvia			351	271	80	0.00%	0.00%
Lebanon	145	107	13,242	6,134	7,108	2.36%	1.51%
Libya			24,188	10,242	13,946	0.00%	0.00%
Lithuania	258		624	496	128	52.02%	0.00%
Madagascar			112	46	66	0.00%	0.00%
Malaysia			798	400	398	0.00%	0.00%
Mali			928	224	704	0.00%	0.00%

Table D-1: Immigrants married to Turks vs. immigrant populations (total 2009-2021)

Source: TUIK (2022b, 2022c)

Citizenship	Marriage total (Female)	Marriage total (Male)	Total migrants	Total migrants (Female)	Total migrants (Male)	Marriage % (Female)	Marriage % (Male)
Mauritania			1,272	340	932	0.00%	0.00%
Mexico			487	315	172	0.00%	0.00%
Moldova	4,472	11	7,546	6,132	1,414	72.93%	0.78%
Mongolia			1,834	1,118	716	0.00%	0.00%
Montenegro			422	249	173	0.00%	0.00%
Morocco	8,853	65	20,520	15,441	5,079	57.33%	1.28%
Myanmar			249	115	134	0.00%	0.00%
Nepal			1,629	873	756	0.00%	0.00%
Netherlands	1,637	1,248	7,686	3,462	4,224	47.28%	29.55%
New Zealand			243	120	123	0.00%	0.00%
Niger			450	105	345	0.00%	0.00%
Nigeria		307	12,920	2,466	10,454	0.00%	2.94%
North Macedonia	1,073	255	1,897	1,130	767	94.96%	33.25%
Norway	640	239	2,607	1,275	1,332	50.20%	17.94%
Pakistan		297	17,290	5,599	11,691	0.00%	2.54%
Palestine		277	28,027	10,941	17,086	0.00%	1.62%
Peru			138	87	51	0.00%	0.00%
Philippines	1,105	11	4,006	3,545	461	31.17%	2.39%
Poland	1,482	107	1,263	881	382	168.22%	28.01%

Table D-1: Immigrants married to Turks vs. immigrant populations (total 2009-2021)

Source: TUIK (2022b, 2022c)

Citizenship	Marriage total (Female)	Marriage total (Male)	Total migrants	Total migrants (Female)	Total migrants (Male)	Marriage % (Female)	Marriage % (Male)
Portugal		93	322	114	208	0.00%	44.71%
Qatar			931	291	640	0.00%	0.00%
Republic of South Africa			883	413	470	0.00%	0.00%
Romania	2,394	181	2,116	1,524	592	157.09%	30.57%
Russia	17,112	219	66,786	41,616	25,170	41.12%	0.87%
Rwanda			243	85	158	0.00%	0.00%
Saint Kitts and Nevis			212	94	118	0.00%	0.00%
Saudi Arabia		21	1,862	709	1,153	0.00%	1.82%
Senegal			2,698	456	2,242	0.00%	0.00%
Serbia	98	87	1,513	794	719	12.34%	12.10%
Sierra Leone			1,430	460	970	0.00%	0.00%
Slovakia			277	202	75	0.00%	0.00%
Slovenia			164	82	82	0.00%	0.00%
Somalia			28,081	13,559	14,522	0.00%	0.00%
South Korea		221	2,977	1,382	1,595	0.00%	13.86%
South Sudan			163	37	126	0.00%	0.00%
Spain		392	1,440	600	840	0.00%	46.67%
Sri Lanka			224	72	152	0.00%	0.00%

Table D-1: Immigrants married to Turks vs. immigrant populations (total 2009-2021)

Source: TUIK (2022b, 2022c)

Citizenship	Marriage total (Female)	Marriage total (Male)	Total migrants	Total migrants (Female)	Total migrants (Male)	Marriage % (Female)	Marriage % (Male)
Sudan			9,538	4,207	5,331	0.00%	0.00%
Sweden	863	352	3,919	1,732	2,187	49.83%	16.10%
Switzerland	67	271	1,238	618	620	10.84%	43.71%
Syria	34,050	4,594	104,554	47,999	56,555	70.94%	8.12%
Taiwan			226	114	112	0.00%	0.00%
Tajikistan	528		7,965	3,792	4,173	13.92%	0.00%
Tanzania			856	468	388	0.00%	0.00%
Thailand	886		2,467	2,000	467	44.30%	0.00%
Togo			415	68	347	0.00%	0.00%
Tunisia	1,015	13	6,033	3,753	2,280	27.05%	0.57%
Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus	1,012	1,151	2,689	1,329	1,360	76.15%	84.63%
Turkmenistan	8,001	215	123,965	58,825	65,140	13.60%	0.33%
Uganda			2,464	1,673	791	0.00%	0.00%
Ukraine	13,134	40	23,377	18,152	5,225	72.36%	0.77%
United Arab Emirates			362	155	207	0.00%	0.00%
United Kingdom	4,547	1,726	16,440	8,201	8,239	55.44%	20.95%
United States	1,441	1,495	12,773	5,995	6,778	24.04%	22.06%
Uzbekistan	11,838	87	71,145	48,060	23,085	24.63%	0.38%

Table D-1: Immigrants married to Turks vs. immigrant populations (total 2009-2021)

Source: TUIK (2022b, 2022c)

Citizenship	Marriage total (Female)	Marriage total (Male)	Total migrants	Total migrants (Female)	Total migrants (Male)	Marriage % (Female)	Marriage % (Male)
Venezuela			284	164	120	0.00%	0.00%
Vietnam			137	97	40	0.00%	0.00%
Yemen		17	18,094	6,879	11,215	0.00%	0.15%
Zambia			294	156	138	0.00%	0.00%
Zimbabwe			626	286	340	0.00%	0.00%
Other	13,600	3,054	2,237	1,054	1,183	1290.32%	258.16%
Stateless			397	166	231	0.00%	0.00%
Unknown			165	68	97	0.00%	0.00%
Total	242,635	49,805	1,792,036	901,179	890,857	26.92%	5.59%

Table D-2: Monthly income level by group in lira									
	Female respondent								
Income (₺)	2003+		Applied		Not yet applied		Not interested		Total
0 - 1999	0	0%	2	17%	10	83%	0	0%	12
2000 - 4000	14	30%	3	6%	21	45%	9	19%	47
4001 - 7000	22	30%	9	12%	26	36%	16	22%	73
7001 - 10,000	24	35%	8	12%	19	28%	18	26%	69
10,001 - 20,000	22	27%	5	6%	20	24%	36	43%	83
20,000+	3	18%	1	6%	4	24%	9	53%	17
No response	2	50%	0	0%	0	0%	2	50%	4
Average ⁵²	₺8,908		₺7,984		₺7,577		₺11,229		
	Male respondent								
	2003+		Applied		Not yet applied		Not interested		Total
0 - 1999	0	0%	0	0%	1	50%	1	50%	2
2000 - 4000	2	50%	0	0%	1	25%	1	25%	4
4001 - 7000	3	33%	1	11%	3	33%	2	22%	9
7001 - 10,000	3	30%	1	10%	3	30%	3	30%	10
10,001 - 20,000	3	20%	0	0%	3	20%	9	60%	15
20,000+	1	20%	0	0%	2	40%	2	40%	5
No response	1	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1
Average	₺9,418		₺5,501		₺10,079		₺11,973		
	Totals								
	2003+		Applied		Not yet applied		Not interested		Total
0 - 1999	0	0%	2	14%	11	79%	1	7%	14
2000 - 4000	16	31%	3	6%	22	43%	10	20%	51
4001 - 7000	25	30%	10	12%	29	35%	18	22%	82

⁵² Averages are calculated using the middle value of each category excepting the category ₺20,000+, which takes the value ₺20,001.

Table D-2: Monthly income level by group in lira									
7001 - 10,000	27	34%	9	11%	22	28%	21	27%	79
10,001 - 20,000	25	26%	5	5%	23	23%	45	46%	98
20,000+	4	18%	1	5%	6	27%	11	50%	22
No response	3	60%	0	0%	0	0%	2	40%	5
Average	₺8,971		₺7,919		₺7,864		₺11,355		

APPENDIX E: CHAPTER 6 ADDITIONAL TABLES AND FIGURES

Table E-1: Immigrant interviewees ⁵³						
Interviewee	Origin	Sex	Status	Applied	Granted	Province
Grace	UK	F	Granted	1984	1984	Muğla
Diana	UK	F	Granted	1999	1999	Muğla
Elizabeth	South Africa	F	Granted	1999	1999	Kocaeli
Sofia	Russia	F	Granted	1999	2000	Antalya
Olga	Russia	F	Granted	2002	2003	Antalya
Olivia	UK	F	Granted	2002	2002	Muğla
Kirstin	USA	F	Granted	2003	2006	Istanbul
Ashley	UK	F	Granted	2004	2004	Kocaeli
Ekaterina	Moldova	F	Granted	2007	2008	Istanbul
Juana	Colombia	F	Granted	2009	2010	Istanbul
Mary	USA	F	Granted	2009	2012	Istanbul
Klara	Sweden	F	Granted	2010	2011	Muğla
Inessa	Russia	F	Denied	2011	----	Antalya
Joanna	UK	F	Granted	2013	2014	Istanbul
Ava	Germany	F	Granted	2015	2016	Istanbul
David	Sweden	M	Granted	2015	2016	Ankara
Evelyn	UK	F	Granted	2015	2017	Muğla
Michelle	UK	F	Denied	2017	----	Antalya
Adeline	Belgium	F	Granted	2018	2019	Istanbul
Emily	Hong Kong	F	Pending	2018	----	Istanbul
Irina	Ukraine	F	Pending	2018	----	Istanbul
Iris	UK	F	Pending	2018	----	Antalya
Josie	UK	F	Pending	2018	----	Ankara

⁵³ All names and identifying details have been changed to respect respondents' privacy.

Table E-1: Immigrant interviewees ⁵³						
Melissa	USA	F	Pending	2018	----	Hatay
Ulyana	Ukraine	F	Pending	2019	----	Antalya

Table E-2: Attorney/consultant interviewees ⁵⁴				
Interviewee	Role	City	Province	No. Cases
Fatih	Attorney	Istanbul	Istanbul	5-10 per year
Başar	Attorney	Istanbul	Istanbul	<5
Murat	Consultant	Istanbul	Istanbul	40 per year
Cansu	Consultant	Istanbul	Istanbul	3-4 per year
Erkan	Consultant	Istanbul	Istanbul	~ 400 per year
Fişek	Consultant	Istanbul	Istanbul	3-5 per year
Ahmet	Consultant	Ankara	Ankara	~ 200 per year
Hamdi	Consultant	Antalya	Antalya	40-50 per year
İlkin	Consultant	Antalya	Antalya	100 per year
Kaan, Ayşe and Deniz	Attorney	Kemer	Antalya	3-5 per year

Table E-3: Survey respondent documents by application period								
	<2003	(38)	2003+	(18)	2010+	(82)	Total	(138)
Marriage certificate	32	84%	17	94%	71	87%	120	87%
Proof of divorce	3	8%	0	0%	12	15%	15	11%
Proof of residence	4	11%	16	89%	58	71%	78	57%
Evidence of relationship validity	1	3%	7	39%	35	43%	43	31%
Home rental/ownership contract (proof of residence)	0	0%	0	0%	31	38%	31	22%

⁵⁴ All names have been changed to respect respondents' privacy.

Table E-3: Survey respondent documents by application period								
Proof of language skill	4	11%	10	56%	40	49%	54	39%
Other	6	16%	0	0%	19	23%	25	18%
*Health report	3	8%	0	0%	0	0%	3	2%
*Respondent birth certificate	0	0%	0	0%	6	7%	6	4%
*Child(ren) birth certificate	0	0%	0	0%	1	1%	1	1%
*Proof of education	0	0%	0	0%	1	1%	1	1%
*Translated & notarized documents	0	0%	0	0%	3	4%	3	2%
*Partner population registration	0	0%	0	0%	1	1%	1	1%
*Partner ID card	0	0%	0	0%	2	2%	2	1%
*Criminal record	0	0%	0	0%	2	2%	2	1%
*Respondent parent/family info	0	0%	0	0%	1	1%	1	1%
*Statement of intent	1	3%	0	0%	0	0%	1	1%
*Nothing	2	5%	0	0%	0	0%	2	1%
Don't know/don't remember	1	3%	3	17%	12	15%	16	12%