

Television helps to define 'home' for the Turkish women of Amsterdam

Christine Ogan and Marisca Milikowski

What is the role of media in the lives of diasporas living in Europe today and do they help such people to come to terms with their 'otherness' in a foreign land? These were the questions posed by recent research among into Turkish communities, especially women, in Amsterdam. The answers, as the following article shows, vary according to age and circumstance, although television is a key factor.

In the fall of 1922 Kemal Ataturk was celebrating victory over the foreign invaders and looking forward to the establishment of the Turkish Republic with great anticipation. Following a victory dinner where he appointed Ismet Inonu to be the delegate to negotiate for Turkey at the Conference of Lausanne, he went to an Ankara cinema to speak to the people. Though the Republic had not yet been officially established or recognized, Ataturk was already planning his enormous social reform.

According to Lord Kinross' account of the speech he gave that evening at the victory rally, the audience was dominated by women - and it was to them he spoke. 'Win for us the battle of education and you will do yet more for your country than we have been able to do. It is to you that I appeal.'

To the men, he said: 'If henceforward the women do not share in the social life of the nation, we shall never attain our full development. We shall remain irremediably backward, incapable of treating on equal terms with the civilizations of the West.'

To the whole crowd, he said:

And all that will still be nothing if you refuse to enter resolutely into modern life, if you reject the obligations which it imposes. You will be the lepers, pariahs, alone in your obstinacy, with your customs of another age. Remain yourselves, but learn how to take from the West what is indispensable to an evolved people. Admit science and new ideas into your lives. If you do not, they will devour you (Kinross, 1964, p. 390).

Kinross said the speech was followed by a tumultuous applause and the women wept. Up to that point, women lived separate lives from men. They were veiled in public, kept in separate quarters at public functions and on public transportation, and walked behind their husbands if they went out on the street together. Ataturk emancipated women - at first in the cities and later in the towns and villages. He wanted the country to be Western in its social practices, and to recognize the contributions of women on a par with those of men.

In the years following these changes, many Turkish women began to take their places beside men - socially and in the work place. Of late, however, in Turkey a significant number of women have chosen to adopt a more traditional Islamic role for themselves. Some of these women feel that Ataturk did harm to women and men by minimizing the role Islam should play in their lives. And their return to more traditional Islamic positions signifies a rejection of the Westernization that took place in Turkey in the 1920s and 1930s. Another group of women who are mostly well educated, particularly those who Arat defines as 'Kemalist Women, 'believe that Islamists are 'reactionary, of the Middle Ages, and foreign' (Arat, 1997, p. 109).

The Turkish women, who live in Europe among European women with no dress or employment restrictions, may constitute one of the largest groups of Turkish women to return to a more orthodox Muslim life. Gole explains that the rejection of women's equality in dress and position has a strong religious basis:

Muslim societies, however, are established upon the differentiation between men and women, and they embrace the patterns of hierarchical and vertical relationships between the sexes. The injection of the equality principle into the prevailing relations between the sexes via the implementation of the civil law in Turkey is indeed the reflection of the civilizational change upon the social imagination (Gole, 1996, p. 77).

The women in the study we conducted in Amsterdam may represent a variety of positions with respect to religion and cultural traditions.

Turkish workers in Amsterdam

The women in this study are wives or daughters of workers who migrated to the Netherlands beginning in the mid- to late-1960s, at a time when Dutch labour was scarce and the European economies were booming. The men and women were largely uneducated Turkish citizens who came to Holland along with people from other Mediterranean countries to do work that Europeans were unable or unwilling to perform. It seemed almost too good to be true - a situation where everyone benefited. The workers were able to support themselves and their families back in Turkey and had steady jobs with good prospects. The European countries solved their labour problem while not having to commit themselves to the support of the families or to social services

over the long term. And the Turkish government benefited from the foreign currency that was remitted by the worker.

Of course it was too good to be true. Eventually the workers brought their families - or married and formed their families in the European countries. And after they had lived there for a number of years, they realized they would never be returning to Turkey. There were no jobs back home that would pay as well and the Turkish government would not provide social services at the levels they had come to expect in Europe. Besides, they didn't feel comfortable in Turkey anymore. Turks called them 'alamancas', a somewhat derogatory word for those who belonged in Germany rather than Turkey (even if they came from Holland, Belgium, or Switzerland). Their children spoke European languages better than Turkish, and they felt even more out of place than their parents when they returned to the homeland.

This is the setting for our research. We focused on the Turkish population in the capital city of Amsterdam, where 31,028 Turks live. Though the Netherlands has been one of the more responsible and concerned countries in terms of its attitude and treatment of the migrants within its borders, it has also experienced its share of problems and has flip-flopped on its policy regarding these workers (who came largely from Turkey and Morocco, but also from Surinam and the Antilles (former Dutch colonies)).¹ We chose the Turks to study because they are the largest population of migrants, the most politically active,² and the biggest consumers of media from their homeland of any group in Europe.

The Turks are also interesting because they approach life in the Diaspora differently from some other groups. As Appadurai (1990, p. 302) has pointed out, Turks are different from Indians when they become guest-workers. 'Some such guest-worker groups maintain continuous contact with their home-nations, like the Turks, but others, like high-level South Asian migrants tend to desire lives in their new homes, raising anew the problem of reproduction in a deterritorialized context.' To Appadurai, deterritorialization is a central force in the modern world, a process that brings labouring populations into lower class sectors and spaces of relatively wealthy societies, and at the same time creating 'exaggerated and intensified senses of criticism or attachment to politics in the home state' (1990, p. 301). He sees it as a global fundamentalism, functioning alongside religious fundamentalism.

The print and broadcast media originating in Turkey, which are disseminated in Europe, are the most unusual and interesting aspect of this research. In most of the cities of Europe where Turkish populations exist, access to many print publications (including at least 10 daily newspapers) and the ability to receive more than 10 television channels via satellite or cable, make the Turks unique in their ability to receive immediate access to the news of the events occurring in their homeland as well as the popular culture of the moment. Turkey has more private television channels than any other country in Europe, and because all of them are carried on satellite signals, they are easy to receive on small dishes attached to balconies or window sills.³

We wanted to know the role of these media in the lives of the Turkish Diaspora in Amsterdam. Did they ease the burden of living as 'others' in a foreign land with a foreign culture and religion? Or did they serve to separate them even more from the dominant culture, making it difficult or impossible for themselves or their children and grandchildren ever to be fully assimilated into Dutch society? These are important questions today in Holland as government officials wrestle with social and political problems related to the migrants and cries for banning of the dishes come from citizens who attribute political disturbances to their existence.

Turkish women in the study

Most women in our study and in the Netherlands do not work outside the home. In fact, most men are retired or unemployed as well. From 1994 data, we know that fewer than 40% of men and 16% of women aged 15 to 64 hold jobs. That figure compares with 50% of Dutch women and about 12% of Moroccan women. More women in the youngest age group (15-24) hold jobs (22%) (Tesser et al., 1996, pp. 85, 86, 89).

Education of both men and women migrants in the Netherlands is not extensive. Of the Turks over age 12, 38% of the women and 20% of the men had no education at all. Another 38% of the women had only primary school education. None of the women had university educations, while 3% had some vocational training, and 8% had more extensive vocational training (Tesser et al., p. 155).

Of the 17 women interviewed for our study, 13 did not work outside the home. The four women who were working were all under the age of 35. Two of the women retired or quit work in factories. In this group of women, six had high school educations or vocational school equivalents (but four of those grew up in Holland and were educated there), three did some vocational training after fifth grade, another five had only fifth grade educations and three were illiterate and had not education.

Focusing on migrants

The major focus of this study was on the migrants themselves. Seventeen women living in the Amsterdam area were interviewed for about two hours concerning their attitudes about life in Dutch society, their use of Dutch and Turkish media, their contact with and travel to Turkey, their cultural orientation, and their plans for the future. Interviews were conducted during the last two weeks in June 1997 and also in August. The women were selected in several ways. Some contacts were made by Turkish students studying at the University of Amsterdam. Other names were supplied by the respondents themselves. And additional respondents were found through visits to the coffee houses in the mosques. Although the study makes no claims to representativeness, a variety of people were included in the study. They varied in age, marital

status, whether they had children living at home, occupation and education. They also came from different parts of Turkey.

A qualitative content analysis of television channels received in the Amsterdam area via cable and satellite was conducted in April 1997. The channels were analyzed in terms of the types of programming, the news and public affairs content and the European content included. In addition, survey data collected by the Veldkamp Market Research Company concerning media use by minorities in major Dutch cities was used as a control on the representativeness of the responses made in the open-ended interviews of the Amsterdam residents. The Veldkamp survey was conducted in November 1995 and included 142 Turks. More than half of the Turkish respondents lived in Amsterdam, and the rest were from Rotterdam, Utrecht, Den Haag, Eindhoven and Enschede.

The multi-method approach to studying this issue provided us with sufficient information to be able to discuss the results beyond the confines of the eighteen families, which were the primary focus of the study. In addition, we visited two mosques and spoke with two professionals who work with the Turkish community. One was a programme officer for Migrant television, broadcast on Dutch public television. The other worked with the Turkish community on legal issues and also to set up dialogues with the Dutch community in Amsterdam to improve cultural understanding between the groups.

Migrants, culture, religion and gender

This study is located at the intersection of several literatures, all of which have their roots in cultural studies. This group of women migrants constitute a marginalized community, living outside their birth culture, and seeking personal identities within their families, their neighbourhoods, their religious community and the European society. It has been harder for some of them than for others to locate that identity. Hall has written that the postmodern definition means that there are 'contradictory identities within us pulling in different directions so that our identifications are continuously being shifted about' (1992, p. 277). Nowhere is that clearer than in the lives of immigrants who move between at least two cultures on a regular basis. Establishing identity for migrants involves a reconstruction of what constitutes 'home'. As Benedict Anderson has put it, 'home as it emerged was less experienced than imagined, and imagined through a complex of mediations and representations' (1994, p. 319).

The primary mediation in this study is television from Turkey and television from the Netherlands, bringing news, information, entertainment, religious and political messages to the migrant audience in Europe. The global media environment has been attacked for dispersing Western values and breaking down local cultures. But as Ang (1990, p. 255) points out, 'while the transnational communications system tends to disrupt existing forms of national identification, it also offers opportunities of new forms of bonding and solidarity, new ways of forging cultural communities.' Ang is referring migrants' use of video from their home countries. But she was writing this before the advent of transnational television from countries like Turkey to the rest of

Europe. Giddens agrees that mediated language and imagery allow people to 'have access to experiences ranging in diversity and distance far beyond anything they could achieve in the absence of such mediations' (1991, p. 169). And Gillespie has demonstrated in her study of Punjabi youth in London that 'by articulating new kinds of spatial and temporal relationships, communications technologies can thus transform the modes of identification available within societies' (1995, p. 12). In the case of the Turkish migrants, the opportunity to watch television from Turkey means that the viewers can observe and experience Turkey as a dynamic culture. For most migrants who lack that daily contact from home, the imagined community has less basis in fact.

Appadurai claims the mass mediated environment is central in migrants' lives (1996). He writes that the availability of the:

images, scripts, models, and narratives that come through mass mediation (in its realistic and fictional modes) make the difference between migration today and in the past. Those who wish to move, those who have moved, those who wish to return, and those who choose to stay rarely formulate their plans outside the sphere of radio and television, cassettes and videos, newsprint and telephone. For migrants, both the politics of adaptation to new environments and the stimulus to move or return are deeply affected by a mass-mediated imaginary that frequently transcends national space.

The leaders in the local mosques add another form of mediation for those who spend time in that environment. For the migrant community in Amsterdam and many other European cities, the mosque is more than a place to go to pray. It is also a social centre that offers classes in the Koran and also secular subjects; opportunities to participate in sports, particularly for kids; a grocery store; a coffee house and restaurant. The men who gather for coffee in an Amsterdam mosque claimed that the social activity and the religious focus of the mosque was what held the Turkish community together and kept their children from crime and other trouble. Television programmes from Turkey also offer religious programmes and other news and information interpreted through an Islamic-oriented political lens.

Oncu (1995, p. 51) has noted that the television packages Islam for viewers. 'The analytical centrepiece of my argument is that knowledge of Islam, as produced and disseminated through commercial television, constitutes a new order of reality... because it has been issue-tized.' It has accomplished this goal on the privately owned television channels 'by transcending historical barriers of literacy. It has broken through the closed and immobile corpus of official-ceremonial culture to issue-tize Islam in the public domain' (Oncu, 1995, p. 70). She adds that commercial television has entered the viewers' daily lives, where it helps them to 'define a set of positions for individual subjects' (p. 70).

For some of the women in our study, the fundamentalist positions taken by many of the Muslim clerics in Amsterdam have also helped establish identity in this strange environment. Castells says that when societies look to religion for solace and refuge, fundamentalists in Islam and other

religions have tried to fulfil that need. Islamic women are asked to submit themselves to their guardian men who protect and maintain them (Castells, 1997, p. 16). So women who follow the teachings of Islam find their identity through their husbands and fathers and in their religion. This must be particularly appealing to Diasporic women who are disconnected from their homeland and its traditions and culture. While it is true that many Islamist women are becoming more vocal about establishing their identity apart from their husbands and children, nearly all the women who covered themselves that we talked with did not take such a position (see Gole, 1996). And second generation Turkish women may look to Islam for identity to an even greater degree than their mothers. In a set of interviews conducted by Hassan Bousetta of ERCOMER, he cites Nico Landman as saying that second generation immigrants from Muslim countries identify more with the religion than with their parents' country of origin (May 1997).

One study of public opinion and narrowcast media in Canada finds an interaction between media exposure to a segmented audience and the holding of opinions. If the medium was conscious of broadcasting to a particular audience, pre-existing social cleavages between that audience and the rest of the population were exacerbated (Mendelsohn and Nadeau, 1996). Since some of the television channels from Turkey take a decidedly conservative religious position while others adopt a secular and pro-Western position, the differences in Turkish migrant audiences preferring one type of channel over another might also be expected to be exacerbated.

Television in Amsterdam

Residents of Amsterdam have a large selection of Dutch and Turkish channels to choose from, especially if they own a satellite dish or two. Most of the city's residents subscribe to cable, which offers a range of Dutch and international channels, including TRT-INT, a publicly owned channel from Turkey. Though TRT provides programming in Turkish for virtually every resident in Amsterdam, most of the people we talked with would not choose to watch it if alternative viewing opportunities in Turkish were available. And they are on satellite, where 10 privately owned Turkish channels were being received at the time of the study. The satellite also carries TRT and a pay cinema and sports channel. Most of these channels are owned by people who take a particular political position. A few of them were owned by religious conservatives, attached to the former Refah (Welfare) party⁴ or owned by Islamic businesses. Other private channels are owned by companies with interests in the media businesses (newspapers and radio) and also banking. The high cost of producing local programming leads to schedules that include many cheap imported programmes (old Hollywood films, cartoons and soap operas) or the production of cheap domestic shows (game shows, live music, variety entertainment and talk shows). Very little time or money goes to local productions of drama or comedy or of documentaries. When a popular series is produced, as much as 25 minutes in an hour can be taken up by advertising, while less popular content aired in other-than-prime time slots may have only five minutes of advertising in an hour.

In the 1995 Veldkamp survey of Dutch migrants, 43% of the Turkish respondents owned a satellite dish and 52% subscribed to cable. An additional 34% had a master antenna. Since that time, many more Turkish families have purchased dishes. In our study, only four respondents did not own satellite dishes.

The content analysis of most of the channels received in Amsterdam was conducted by students in an international communications class at Middle East Technical University 28 April to 4 May 1997. Programming for all channels except TRT-INT is primarily created for Turks in Turkey, and their analysis of news and information programmes found that extremely little information was included about the Turkish community in Europe. In fact, little information about European life or public affairs was included. The overwhelming emphasis was on Turkish politics, which may explain why the people we interviewed in Amsterdam seemed to know more about the political events in Turkey than those in the Netherlands. Of the channels analyzed, a low of 4 minutes (InterStar) for a seven-day period and a high of 81.5 minutes (ATV) of news was reported from Europe or that included European actors.

TRT-INT, on the other hand, was established to provide entertainment and cultural information from home to the Turks living abroad. More than 95% of the programming is domestically produced and 60% of all programmes include content directly related to Turkey. One-fourth of the programming is domestic music.

The big attraction for the Turkish community is the public affairs and news programmes, the sports and music. Dubbed versions of American sitcoms and dramatic programmes are interesting because they are broadcast in a language most migrants can understand better than Dutch or English.

In Veldkamp's 1995 survey of media use by migrants in the Netherlands, 142 Turks were interviewed. It must be remembered that at the time, fewer migrants had purchased satellite dishes. Even so, 56% of the men and 68% of the women reported watching more television from Turkey than Dutch television. On weekdays, respondents reported watching an average of about 4.5 hours. However, women watched more than men (5 hours vs. 3.8 hours). On Saturdays women watched 6 hours while men watched 4.7 hours and Sunday viewing was similarly reported.

In the Veldkamp survey, respondents were asked whether they wanted to have more media coverage of certain topics by the media. Since Turkish media meet few of migrants' Dutch informational needs, the answers to these questions are important. Of the women respondents, the most sought after information included religion (76%), Dutch lessons (81%), life in the Netherlands (83%), opportunities for Turkish youth (88%), Turkish women's issues (88%), and education for Turkish children (92%). Since religion is a central part of many Turkish families in Holland, it is interesting that only 12% of the women, but 70% of the men said they visited the mosque. This could lead to further isolation of women since the mosque is also a centre of social activity. Of the respondents in the survey, 86% of the men and 87% of the women were married. All of the women and 92% of the men were married to Turkish spouses. An average number of four people lived in the households of the respondents, and each family had an average of three children with a range from none to nine.

Women and home

Our interviews with seventeen Turkish women, aged 20 to 55, led us to the conclusion that home is not the same to everyone. And no matter how long they had lived in The Netherlands, all of the women had strong cultural ties to Turkey. The amount of attachment to the birth country varied, of course, but even if they had grown up and been educated in Holland, they had not divorced themselves from Turkey in any significant way.

Perhaps we shouldn't be surprised by that. Not only did they live in communities predominately populated with Turks or Moroccans, but they made periodic vacation trips back to Turkey, and were consumers of Turkish media on a regular basis. Amsterdam is a largely segregated city when it comes to its migrant populations, particularly Turkish and Moroccan migrants. Many of the long-term Amsterdam residents said that their neighbourhoods used to house a lot of Dutch people, but that over the years, the Dutch moved out and the foreign population increased. Neighbourhood schools are therefore similar. Respondents told us that from 60 to 100% of the students in the schools their children attend are foreign.⁵ So it may not have been possible for the Turks to become separated from Turkey when confronted with constant reminders of their birth culture. In addition, their neighbourhoods were filled with shops that contained all the goods and food they could find in Turkey. And neighbourhood mosques that also served as social centres could be found all over Amsterdam.

While the attachment to Turkey was common in all the women interviewed, there were important differences as well. Those writers who refer to migrants as homogeneous groupings with common experiences and feelings are wrong. Individual differences among even these 17 women are very great. But we are also aware that there are very definite limits to the diversity possible for these and other migrant women. Gillespie (1995, p. 208) came to a similar conclusion in her study of the Punjabi youth in Southall:

Though much of this book may be read as an affirmation of media consumers' resourcefulness in constructing their own identities, we should not lose sight of the very real constraints upon their freedom to do so: the nation state continues to define its ethnic minorities as internal others; and class, gender, religion, locality, generation and other factors, which are not freely chosen, continue to set limits on self-invention.

Although we believe that a quantitative analysis of a full-scale survey of the population would indicate that the amount of education and the degree of language facility in Dutch, and probably whether the person works outside the home, would be the strongest predictors of significant attachment to the Dutch culture, many other variables play roles in cultural orientation. Of course the entry of a full range of Turkish media to Europe complicates the situation, especially for the younger women who previously had only Dutch television to view.

Our respondents had little education overall. Of the four high school graduates in the study, two were educated in Turkey and two in the Netherlands. Three of these women work outside the home. Only four women of the 17 are now employed, but several women spent some time working in Dutch factories or hospitals or in shops. Given the large percentage of unemployment

among Turks, this group is not unusual.

Though the rest of the women spent much of their time in their homes, they are not the same. Despite the differences, they are all resigned to living in the Netherlands for the rest of their lives. Some of the younger women really express a love for Amsterdam and could not imagine living anywhere else. And the children of the older women say they don't feel as comfortable in Turkey when they go for summer holiday as they do in Amsterdam. Some of the women who have lived in the Netherlands for a much longer time would like to return to Turkey but know it is not possible. Their jobs are in Amsterdam and their retirement is secure. If their children are grown, they too have settled in the Netherlands. For the mothers of these grown children, a return would mean separation from their children and grandchildren. Two of the families in their 30s brought their parents to live in Holland, so they have no reason to return. But most of these women claim their hearts are in Turkey.

Take Emine for example. She and her husband came from a village near Sivas in Anatolia. Ali, her husband, went to Amsterdam first and got a job working in a steel factory in 1974. Three years later Emine came, at the age of 22. Illiterate in Turkish, and with only a single year of education, she found life difficult in Amsterdam. She has raised three children there. The oldest daughter has a high school degree and the second oldest has studied in vocational school. The youngest daughter is 10 years old. All the members of her family have taken Dutch citizenship, but she has been unable to do so because of her inability to speak Dutch. Before she left Turkey she worked in the fields, like other village women. Though the work was hard, it was also a social affair, as family and neighbours worked side by side. But her childhood in Turkey was confining too. She rarely left the village. And even now, when the family returns for vacation, they only visit the village and the neighbouring city. The girls content themselves with swimming in pools in Sivas and have never been to the beach nor to see the historic sites in Istanbul or on the coasts.

In Amsterdam Emine found herself isolated. She said she had no opportunity to learn Dutch when she was raising her children. Now she has no interest, but she is completely dependent on her children or her husband to do shopping in Dutch-owned stores or go anywhere outside her immediate neighbourhood. There are activities for women at the mosque they attend, but she doesn't go. She would have to ride the tram to get there. Her world is very small. And her older children worry about her because they say she is lonely. Her loneliness leads to greater illness too. She notes that the weather is always bad and she gets sick often. The bad weather also means she hasn't been able to send the children outside to play when they were growing up. She was probably apprehensive about doing that because her home village was usually sunny and had long summers.

When asked whether she would consider a permanent return to Turkey, she thought a long time, then said no, her children were there. Maybe after retirement we can return, she says. She notes a difference between her feelings about Turkey and those of her daughters. She says they can hardly bear to stick it out for the entire three-week vacation when they go. Those trips back don't come very often for Emine. Because of limited resources, they say they try to go every three years, but report only one trip in the last five years. They are trying to save enough money for a house of their own, and leave the largely Turkish neighbourhood where they rent an apartment. It is not surprising that Turkish television is a comfort to Emine. She claims it is always on and they

all watch when they can. Once they installed their dish, they even dropped their subscription to the newspaper, a Milli Gorus partisan paper. Emine's husband characterizes the role of television in the family's life in an interesting way. 'You are looking for your life on television; you don't pay attention when you don't see yourself there.' For this reason, the family spends little time watching Dutch television.

Sevim is lonely too, but for different reasons. Sevim is 52 and has also raised three children in Amsterdam. She never wanted to move there. At least she hadn't wanted to leave Turkey until her children had all completed elementary school, but her husband wouldn't listen. She's lived in Holland for 24 years. Sevim had some education in Turkey. After she finished the fifth grade she went to a vocational school where she received a diploma. In Turkey she worked as a seamstress. Upon coming to Amsterdam she found work at first in a sugar factory and later doing cleaning in a hospital, working a total of 12 years. For many years she happily raised her family of three and entertained her friends on a regular basis. Of late, however, life holds fewer pleasures. Her husband died seven years ago. And she developed serious illness shortly after that. Her latest bout has been with breast cancer that has spread to other parts of her body.

She has many regrets about now being settled in Amsterdam. Most of the regret surrounds her children. She believes that life would have been different for her if she had never left Turkey. Her children don't have the family values she considers so important. One of her sons lives with his girlfriend and she does not approve. Children should live at home until they get married, she says. All of her children live elsewhere in Amsterdam. They are educated through vocational school and have good jobs. She claims they pay little attention to her, however, and that would not happen had they stayed in Turkey. Since she is ill, the traditional family values become all the more important to her and the treatment for her illness prevents her from going back to Turkey as often as she'd like.

She's very involved in the news of Turkish politics and the television news and entertainment from Turkey is her constant companion. Though she speaks Dutch, she is losing it and says she doesn't have the energy for a foreign language anymore. She has both Dutch and Turkish friends but spends less time with her Dutch friends in recent years. Her illness clouds her view of what home should be but she thinks more friends and relatives would surround her in Turkey. When people don't feel well, they look for the familiar to comfort them. Sevim is in that position, and she wishes she could do life over again so her children could have turned out as she would like and she could be nurtured by her own people and culture.

Meryam, 42, is another woman out of sync with Dutch culture. Of the women I talked to, she seems the most detached from her physical surroundings. This is surprising because she is the only woman who came from her small town in south-eastern Turkey to the Netherlands as a single person to work in a factory. She met her husband in Amsterdam, married there and now has three children, two daughters in elementary school and a 15-year old son that was educated through the eighth grade in Turkey. She quit working after seven years and has withdrawn to a world that only includes her family, some Turkish friends and television from Turkey. As far as could be determined, Meryam's home is her apartment in a mostly foreign-populated neighbourhood. Though she attended school in Turkey through the fifth grade, she is not very literate in either language. She reads no newspaper, but rather depends on her husband to read it

to her. She only watches Turkish television since her husband bought the satellite dish, watching six or seven hours a day.

Sevim claims she is closer to the Netherlands than to Turkey, but that is hard to believe. She has no knowledge of news or public affairs in the city or the country. Her only awareness of her Dutch surroundings is that the government has withdrawn many of the free services her family used to receive, and that there are fewer parking places available. She rarely leaves her neighbourhood, except to go on picnics at the weekend with her family. And she has never visited her children's school. She said she chose the school based on a friend's recommendation, without any first-hand knowledge of the place. She returns to Turkey every second year for summer holiday but doesn't express any wish to return permanently.

Religion played a role in the lives of all the women in the study. Whether they claimed to be devout Muslims, observing all the practices of Islam or were religious in name only, all the women expressed some attachment to their faith. Those who came from more religiously conservative families tended to have more children, wear head scarves and long dresses and also cover their daughters from very young ages. They also seemed to have less education and less physical mobility. They were more likely to let their husbands do the talking in the interviews unless I asked them direct questions. But even the more conservative women were not a homogeneous group.

One interesting exception was Hakime, mother of four and wife of a college-educated Imam who works with foreign youth in the Amsterdam prisons. Hakime's two daughters, a 10-year old and a 16-year old, both wear head scarves and long dresses. Hakime grew up in Elazig where she attended school through the fifth grade. She married in her teen years and has lived in Holland since she was 24. She is now 35. What sets Hakime apart from the other women who hold conservative religious positions is her attitude toward education. She and her husband hold education in the highest regard and believe their children, including their daughters, should get as much of it as possible. Her oldest daughter is in a college preparatory-level high school programme and plans to go to university to study law. Hakime and her husband have no fear that their children will be harmed by contact with Dutch culture the way other Turks do who hold strong religious beliefs. The oldest daughter attends school with only Dutch students and says she has only Dutch friends.

Her parents think it is important for people who are foreign to the culture like they are to learn enough to become a part of the host culture. The apartment is filled with her husband's theological books and Hakime goes to school now herself. Though all the family members had enough Dutch to pass the language exam for citizenship, Hakime did not. This prompted her to enroll in a language course that meets four hours a day, four days a week. She has learned enough Dutch to pass the exam but is continuing the course to become more proficient in the language, another indicator of the importance placed on education in her family.

Hakime thinks life for women in Holland is no different than in Turkey, especially if the women

work outside the home. And if the women come from Turkish villages and learn no Dutch, they live almost exactly as they did in Turkey, she says. She and her husband think that the husbands of these women make them think they can't learn to adapt to life as it is in The Netherlands. They fear they will change and adopt new values that won't be acceptable if they become educated according to Hakime. Both Hakime and her husband think that Turks who live in Holland should organize and become involved in the political life of the country. If they were to do that, they would become empowered and be able to bring about change. So where is home for Hakime? It is most certainly in the Netherlands among the Dutch people, but it is in a cultural and religious environment that grows out of her Turkish roots and is modified by her Dutch surroundings.

Younger women and their angst

Several women in this study were raised from early ages in the Netherlands. And each of these women has gone through a soul searching process of determining their cultural identity. All of these women have parents who came to Amsterdam to be workers, who were poorly educated, and had little worldly experience before their arrival. The women have attended Dutch schools but lived in mostly Turkish neighbourhoods. They have all returned to Turkey on a regular basis to renew family ties and spend summer holidays. As young adults now, they question where they belong. One went through a serious religious experience; another went back to try to live in Turkey; and still another discovered her cultural heritage was really Kurdish and joined a Kurdish organization. Even more seriously than their parents, these women have searched for a sense of belonging. Some are still searching.

Demet is one of these young women. She is 20 years old and holds down two jobs, one in a laundry and another as a waitress in a cafe. She has only vocational training. Though she wanted to study more, her father did not permit it because she was a girl. She toys with the idea of moving to Turkey to live. She knows from the programmes she watches on Turkish television that the lives Turks live in Turkey are different from the lives Turks live in the Netherlands. Sometimes she thinks that if she lived in Turkey it would be wonderful. But, she says, 'when I'm thinking clearly I know it could not work. I've been raised here; earning money is very hard there, and if you've no job you get nothing. You must be fairly rich to go and live there... Yes, Turkey is OK, but Holland is OK too. But for a future, how I see my future... I don't know yet.'

Though she never prays nor attends services at the mosque, she says that religion plays a big role in her life. She says that when she sees a Dutch boy and girl kissing, she knows she could never do that because it isn't allowed in her notion of Islamic values. A few years ago at Ramazan, Demet she decided to become involved with a group at a mosque. It was a particularly conservative sect and out of the teachings of the leaders, she came to believe that wearing blue jeans was immoral, that Ataturk was a bad person who brought misery to Turkey, that watching television and taking pictures of human beings was also immoral, and that she could not interpret the Koran for herself but needed their guidance. Finally, her parents forbade her to go to that mosque anymore, ending her connection with these teachings. But it seemed to Demet that she was trying to find her place in her culture by involving herself with this group.

Finally, she too is uncomfortable with such a conservative view of the world. But she is also torn between her beliefs and the practices she observes in the Turkish community. She thinks that husbands and wives should be equal, sharing in household work as well as having independent lives outside their marriage. But she notes that 'Turkish women here in Holland are treated by their men, not exactly as slaves, but as being less... 'You're a woman and you must do everything for me and I'm a man and I've the right to say and do everything I want so you must do what I say,' she says. Demet thinks that Dutch men are more interested in equality between the sexes. 'Oh, I'd like a cup of tea, they think, and then they ask if the woman would like some tea. And then the man will make it.'

Demet thinks that television has given her a clearer view of present-day culture in Turkey, so she was eager for her parents to view the contemporary programmes and understand that their notions of Turkish culture were out of step. But she found that she learned a lot too. She especially learned a great deal about history and politics and came to appreciate a more educated way of speaking Turkish. Her parents were villagers, so they spoke with the accent of their region. Television has made her understand her parents' lives and place in the world too. 'When I compare my parents with those in Turkey I feel that my parents stand completely still. Totally. They don't walk forward; they don't walk backward.' But Demet is still trying to determine which way to walk and television is helping her sort that out. She observes that the young people on Turkish television live 'free and easy' lives, and thinks those lives resemble what she knows about the lives of modern Dutch youth.

Birgul, 22, who works as a flight attendant for Istanbul Airlines, says at times she feels like a foreigner in both Holland and Turkey. But Birgul has an additional cultural issue to contend with. At age 17 she discovered that she is of Kurdish heritage, and therefore of a minority group in Turkey. She went to school with a good friend, also a Kurd, who urged her to attend the Kurdish student organization. At first she really loved going - the music and the dancing and the Kurdish costumes of yellow, green and red with gold trim. All of that was attractive to her. Then Birgul realized that she didn't like certain things about the organization. Men and women were put in separate rooms. And the group would make disparaging remarks about Turks and it made her question her own opinions and experiences. She wondered if the bad things she heard about Turks could be true. 'Because if Turks are so bad, why did I never notice that,' she asked herself. Finally she decided that she didn't want to accept this line of thinking and stopped going to the group meetings. Once she made the decision that she was not going to turn against the friends she had who were Turkish, she came to the conclusion that no matter whether a person was Kurdish, Turkish or Dutch, that individual was a human being first and that was all that mattered.

But issues of identity remain complicated. She has experienced discrimination as a foreigner in Holland. Once, on the basis of her ethnicity, she was overlooked for a scholarship that would have sent her to the United States. She was told that the scholarship board was only interested in Dutch students going, not foreigners. Her feelings of being an outsider led her to a temporary return to Turkey. She lived in Istanbul for a while but soon realized that her values were different from those she found around her. She was disturbed that a system of patronage worked when a person was trying to get a job or get promoted. In Holland merit worked more often, she thought. She was also unhappy with living conditions and the ways life was organized. She didn't fit in and returned to Amsterdam. In the end Birgul says she is more connected to Holland than to Turkey. She loves living in Amsterdam, even as she continues to struggle with who she is.

Conclusion

Identity for any migrant is a difficult issue. It may be more difficult when the home culture and host culture have so little in common. And complicating the process of moving closer to the host culture is the pull from home - a pull that comes largely from the mass media. As can be seen from the profiles of these few women, television both helps them understand who they are, and keeps them from growing and learning more. It is both a comfort and a stimulus for continued internal conflict. It doesn't have a single unified influence on these women or on the larger migrant population in the Netherlands. But it does have some impact on everyone who watches it.

This research represents a work in progress. We plan to return to the field to spend more time trying to determine whether the experiences of our respondents represent patterns we will find in the larger migrant community in the Netherlands. We are especially concerned about the experiences people have where media, religion and politics intersect. And we wonder whether the Turkish migrants in Amsterdam are like migrants in other European cities who come from other home cultures. We won't know whether this research tells us anything that can contribute to the larger understanding of the life experiences and problems of migrants or the role of television in defining home for them unless we continue to ask questions and expand the research setting. We hope we have made a solid beginning on this work. We believe we have.

1. The former residents of Surinam and the Antilles did not come to the Netherlands as guest-workers, however. They came about the same time when Surinam gained its independence from Holland.
2. More than 100 official organizations of various kinds are listed for the Turks in Amsterdam alone.
3. Seref Acer, producer of public affairs programming at MTV (Migrant Television), says the dishes are currently priced at around 250 guilders and 650 guilders for a motorized dish.
4. The Refah Party was closed by the Constitutional Court in 1998. Some of its members are a part of a new conservative party, called Fazilet (Virtue). It remains to be seen how this party will develop.
5. In Amsterdam only 36% of youth aged 15-20 are Dutch in the traditional sense. Another 44% are Surinamese, Moroccan, Turkish or Antillian, while the remaining 20% are from a wide range of other countries.

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Christine Ogan teaches in the School of Journalism of Indiana University, Bloomington, USA.

Marisca Milikowski teaches in the Department of Communication Science of the University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands.