# Empathic Tendency, Majority Culture Representation, and Political Conservatism as Predictors of Intercultural Sensitivity

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## Abstract

This study aims to determine the variables capable of predicting the concept of intercultural sensitivity. For this reason, it uses correlational survey model. The participants in this study were the prospective primary school teachers studying in Dicle and Marmara Universities in Turkey. This study employed basically three tools for data collection-namely- Personal Information Form, Empathetic Tendency Scale, and Intercultural Sensitivity Scale. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was employed to analyze the data obtained in this study. According to the results obtained in this research, individuals' empathetic, sympathetic and egocentric tendencies, their properties representing the majority culture, and their levels of political conservatism account for 23.8% of their levels of intercultural sensitivity.

**Keywords:** *intercultural sensitivity, empathy, majority culture, political conservatism*

## 1. Introduction

Countries can easily influence each other in economic, political, cultural and social aspects in the globalizing world. This interaction between countries emerging as a consequence of rapid advances in communication and information technologies and of expansion in national-international trade networks (Çalık & Sezgin 2005) enables individuals of differing national and international characteristics to communicate with each other (Çakmak, Bulut, & Taşkıran 2015, Kan 2009). In order to be able to comprehend the spirit of the time in such a world order, concepts such as intercultural sensitivity should be understood in details (Bekiroğlu & Balcı 2014). So as to develop this conception, this study aims to determine the variables capable of predicting the "intercultural sensitivity" concept. Having controlled the potential effects of cultural properties representing the majority culture and of the levels of political conservatism, an attempt is made in this study to find especially whether or not empathetic tendency, in particular, predicts intercultural sensitivity.

### 1.1. Literature Review

The acceleration of the globalization process has increased economic, political, religious and acculturation between different countries. This, in turn, enabled people of diverse cultural properties to communicate more easily. In order for the communication to occur in a healthy manner, individuals need to have intercultural communication skills (McMurray 2007, Albut 2012). Intercultural communication occurs when two individuals of at least two diverse cultures come together and interact verbally or non-verbally (Neuliep 2006). According to Chen and Starosta (1998), intercultural communication skills are composed of three aspects- namely, cognitive, affective and behavioral. While intercultural awareness is related to the cognitive aspect of intercultural communication skills, intercultural competence is related to the behavioral aspect, and intercultural sensitivity is related to the affective aspect of intercultural communication skills (Chen & Starosta 2000). While intercultural awareness refers to understanding the cultural properties influencing the thoughts and behaviors of individuals with differing cultural properties, intercultural competence refers to such skills as discussing multiple meanings and managing the chaos in a context- which are necessary for intercultural communication. Intercultural sensitivity, on the other hand, is defined as the ability to distinguish between and experience cultural differences (Baños 2006; Chen & Starotsa 1998; Hammer, Bennet, & Wiseman 2003).

The concept of intercultural sensitivity, which is the focal point in this study, is individuals' ability to develop positive feelings in order to understand and appreciate intercultural differences during intercultural communication in appropriate and effective manners (Chen 1997). According to Medina-Lopez-Portillo (2004), intercultural sensitivity is individuals' worldview shaping the ways in which they experience and manipulate cultural differences. According to another definition, the developmental process in which individuals improve their cognitive, affective and behavioral efficacies necessary for intercultural communication is called intercultural sensitivity (Peng 2006). As is clear from the definitions of intercultural sensitivity, there are approaches regarding the concept as a skill, a worldview or a developmental process in the definitions. Despite these differences, all of the approaches describe intercultural sensitivity- which is the affective aspect of communication skills- and they also emphasize the cognitive and behavioral aspects of intercultural communication skills. Based on the emphasis laid, it may be said that individuals firstly should have intercultural sensitivity in order to have intercultural awareness and intercultural competence.

One of the factors capable of influencing intercultural sensitivity-which has central importance in terms of intercultural communication skills due to its ties with intercultural awareness and intercultural competence- is the skill of empathy, which is an essential component of intercultural sensitivity (Del Villar 2010). This skill is defined as individuals' ability to take another individual's perspective in order to be able to adjust to differing roles when differing situations necessitate (Yu & Chen 2008). Empathy skills help us to change our cultural schemata (Tesoriero 2006) in cases where there are especially intercultural differences and therefore a shared meaning should be created (Arasaratnam & Doerfel 2005). For this reason, a number of studies (Jackson 2008; Pederson 1997) found significant and positive correlations between empathy skills and the levels of intercultural sensitivity. However, no studies are available researching the extent to which empathetic tendencies, sympathetic tendencies and egocentric tendencies capable of explaining empathy skills (Dökmen 1988) predict the levels of intercultural sensitivity. Setting out from this fact, this study primarily considers empathetic tendency, sympathetic tendency and egocentric tendency in order to be able to explain intercultural sensitivity; and it is estimated that empathetic and sympathetic tendencies would have positive contributions and egocentric tendency would have negative contributions to explaining intercultural sensitivity. This estimation is based on three reasons. First, intercultural sensitivity is a dimension of communication skills in intercultural settings (Baños 2006). Second, the communication skills in intercultural settings require empathy (Arasaratnam & Doerfel 2005). Third, empathetic and sympathetic tendencies affect empathetic communication in a positive way; but egocentric tendencies affect this kind of communication in a negative way (Dökmen 1988).

Another factor apart from empathetic, sympathetic and egocentric tendencies influential in intercultural sensitivity is acculturation (Bhawuk & Brislin 1992; Endicott, Bock, & Narvaez 2003; Üstün 2011; Westrick & Yuen 2007). Relevant studies have found that acculturation occurring in consequence of studying in a country where a different culture is available (Clarke, Flaherty, Wright, & McMillen 2009; Engle & Engle 2004; Pedersen 2010), in consequence of migration into those countries (Altshuler, Sussman, & Kachur 2003; Baños 2006), or in consequence of working in those countries (Bayles 2009) raised the levels of intercultural sensitivity. However, acculturation does not always occur in a different country. Acculturation also occurs between majority culture individuals and minority culture individuals especially in countries hosting majority culture and minority cultures.

There are four forms of acculturation between minority cultures and majority culture based on the minority culture. Accordingly, individuals of the minority culture can be assimilated and communicate with the majority culture individuals by ignoring their own culture. They can be marginalized and ignore both their culture and the majority culture. By being separated, they can protect their own culture and ignore the majority culture, or they can adapt and thus can both preserve their own culture and set up relations with the majority culture (Berry & Sam, 1997; Phinney, Horencyzk, Liebkind, & Vedder 2001). Adaptation, one way of acculturation, indicates an important point for intercultural sensitivity- that individuals become aware of their own culture (Korshuk 2008) and that they experience different cultural perspectives (Bennett & Bennett 2004). Yet, it should be emphasized that the direction of cultural adjustment is generally from minority cultures to majority cultures. The reason for this is that individuals of the minority culture are obliged to learn- or experience- the language, belief and ethnical properties of the majority culture so as to be accepted as individuals in the majority culture. However, the individuals of the majority culture can still be accepted as individuals in their culture even if they do not learn the language, beliefs and ethnical properties of minority cultures. Therefore, it is thought in this study that- in addition to variables about empathy-whether or not individuals identify themselves with the language, beliefs and ethnical properties of the minority culture or of the majority culture can also explain intercultural sensitivity. Accordingly, it is assumed that descriptions concerning the language, belief, and ethnicity of the majority culture reduce intercultural sensitivity.

The final factor capable of influencing intercultural sensitivity and considered within the scope of this study is the level of political conservatism. Two main driving forces for individuals to describe themselves as politically conservative are fear and uncertainty (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway 2003). Since individuals with political conservatism perceive fear and uncertainty as a threat, they resist changes and prefer conventional forms of behavior because they find them more reliable (Wilson 1973). Considering the fact that individuals, in general, are afraid of cultural differences (Olson & Kroeger 2001), forms of behavior belonging to cultures to which they are not accustomed cannot be very reliable. This can affect politically conservative individuals' levels of intercultural sensitivity in negative ways.

Another factor influencing politically conservative individuals' development of intercultural sensitivity negatively is thought to be the tendency to oppose equality- which is observable in those individuals (Jost et al. 2007). According to politically conservative individuals, society is safer in hierarchical order; and equality is contrary to hierarchical order (Bobbio 1996). Therefore, when approached in conservative perspective, a hierarchical arrangement should be made culturally in societies containing majority and minority cultures. Yet, considering the fact that conservative individuals can be biased, strict and closed to the individuals belonging to groups other than theirs (de Zavala, Cisłak, & Wesołowska 2010; Kemmelmeier 2007; Thórisdóttir & Jost 2011), it is thought that they will also have those negative attitudes towards individuals with cultural differences. Intercultural sensitivity, on the other hand, requires being unbiased rather than biased towards a culture and interacting with it rather than being strict about it, and being open rather than closed to it (Chen 1997). Thus, this study includes the levels of political conservatism in the factors predictable in intercultural sensitivity, and it assumes that the levels of political conservatism reduce the levels of intercultural sensitivity.

## 2. Method

The model, participants and data collection tools of this study- which is performed in quantitative research method- are described below.

### 2.1. Research Model

This study uses correlational survey model. Correlational survey models aim to determine whether or not there are any mutual exchanges between at least two variables and to determine the levels of exchange if there are any (Karasar 2012:81-82).

### 2.2. Participants

The participants in this study were the prospective primary school teachers studying in Ziya Gökalp Faculty of Education of Dicle University and the prospective primary school teachers studying in Ataturk Faculty of Education of Marmara University. The information on the participants is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1:** *Personal Information on Participants*

|  | f | % |
|---|---|---|
| **University** |  |  |
| *Dicle University* | 233 | 62.0 |
| *Marmara University* | 143 | 38.0 |
| **Ethnic Group** |  |  |
| *Majority culture* | 112 | 29.8 |
| *Minority culture* | 264 | 70.2 |
| **Native Language** |  |  |
| *Majority culture* | 207 | 55.1 |
| *Minority culture* | 169 | 44.9 |
| **Belief** |  |  |
| *Majority culture* | 317 | 84.3 |
| *Minority culture* | 59 | 15.7 |

According to Table 1, 62% of the participants are from Dicle University whereas 38% of them are from Marmara University. The majority of the participants (70.2%) are the pre-service teachers representing the minority culture. On considering the issue in terms of Turkey, Turks were the members of the majority culture. Ethnic groups in this study representing the minority culture were Arabs, Circassians, Kurds, Laz people and Zaza people. 55.1% of the participants spoke Turkish as their native language, and Turkish was the language of the majority culture. The languages considered in this study and spoken as the native languages of the minority cultures were Arabic, Circassian, Kurdish, Laz Language and Zaza language. The participants adopted the Islamic Sunnah belief to

a large extent (84.3%), which was adopted by the majority culture in Turkey. Apart from those, there were also participants who described themselves as Alewis, Agnostics, Deists, Atheists or belonging to no religions in this study- all of whom were considered to belong to minority cultures.

## 2.3. Data Collection Tools

This study employed basically three tools for data collection-namely- Personal Information Form, Empathetic Tendency Scale, and Intercultural Sensitivity Scale. The *Personal Information Form* was developed for the purposes of the study. It included questions on the university participants attended, ethnicity to which they thought they belonged, their native language, belief, and level of political conservatism. Alternatives were presented at first for the answers to the questions about ethnicity, native language, and beliefs; but each was coded as a dummy variable while being analyzed as independent variables in hierarchical multiple regression. For instance, the participants were presented the choices of "Arab, Kurd, Laz, Zaza, and other" to determine the ethnicity they thought they had belonged to; however, those who considered their ethnicity as 'Turk' were coded as "1" whereas those who chose ethnicities other than Turk were coded as "0". Because of the fact that the nature of some of the information requested in the form such as ethnicity, native language and religious belief is controversial, participants weren't asked to state their innate ethnicity, ancestral language or religious belief dictated by society. Instead, they were asked to choose one of the alternatives for ethnicity and religious belief that they thought they belonged. When asking their native language, the term of native language was described as the language that they learnt first and that makes communication easiest for them. The concept of political conservatism was operationalized by asking participants to choose their degree of political conservatism using a 5-pointed scale which includes options from non-conservative (1) to very conservative (5). *Empathetic Tendency Scale*, which was developed by Dökmen (1988), was a 5-pointed Likert type scale and was composed of 20 items and three factors. They were the factors of empathetic tendency, egocentric tendency, and sympathetic tendency. *Intercultural Sensitivity Scale*, on the other hand, was developed by Chen and Starosta (2000). The scale in its original form contained five factors: interaction engagement, respect for cultural differences, interaction confidence, interaction enjoyment, and interaction attentiveness. The scale was adapted into Turkish by Üstün (2011) as having 23 items and one factor, and it was used as such in this study.

The reliability of the measurements made with the scale in the study was determined through Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient, and thus interpretations were made. Accordingly, Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient determined for the measurements with the sensitivity scale was found to be 0.87 while it was found as .63 for the sub-factor of the empathetic tendency of the empathetic tendency scale, and as .60 for the sub-factors of egocentric tendency and sympathetic tendency. Considering the fact that the reliability coefficient recommended should be at least .70 for scales having more than 10 items, and .60 for scales having fewer than 10 items (Sipahi, Yurtkoru and Çinko 2010), it may be said that the measurements made in this study were reliable.

## 2.4. Data Analysis

Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was employed in this study in order to be able to determine the variables predicting pre-service primary school teachers' levels of intercultural sensitivity. Some assumptions made by Tabachnick and Fidell (2006: 123-128) and which were necessary for regression analyses were tested prior to hierarchical multiple regression analysis. The first assumption was the adequacy of sample size. Since the number of participants in this study (n=376) was more the 15 times (7*15=105) of the number of independent variables (Stevens 2002:143), it may be said that the assumption concerning sample size was met. The second assumption was about multiple linear relationship and singularity. Considering the fact that all of the VIF (variance inflation factor) values for independent variables were smaller than 10 and that all the correlation values between independent variables in Table 2 were smaller than .90, it can be said that the assumption concerning multiple linear relationship was met. Besides, since care was taken not to put the total scale scores and the sub-scales as predictors to analysis at the same time, it may be thought that there are no problems in relation to the assumption of singularity (Büyüköztürk 2010; Seçer 2013: 108).

**Table 2:** *Correlation Values between Independent Variables*

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Intercultural sensitivity | | | | | | | |
| 2. Belonging to dominant ethnic group | -.224 | | | | | | |
| 3. Native language belonging to dominant culture | -.098 | .577 | | | | | |
| 4. Having the dominant belief | -.072 | .089 | .110 | | | | |
| 5. Levels of political conservatism | -.246 | .261 | .273 | .239 | | | |
| 6. Empathetic tendency | .298 | .021 | -.035 | .157 | .008 | | |
| 7. Egocentric tendency | -.263 | -.043 | -.031 | -.171 | -.008 | -.238 | |
| 8. Sympathetic tendency | .071 | .100 | .084 | .185 | .052 | .310 | -.055 |

The third assumption to meet for regression analysis was that the data was freed from extreme values. Mahalanobis distance values were evaluated to determine the extreme values in this study. Because critical Mahalanobis distance value was 24.32 (Pallant 2007: 157), the values above it were determined and were excluded from the study. In consequence, it was found that the Mahalanobis distance values for 376 data ranged between 2.05 and 23.147. The other assumptions to be tested for regression analysis were normality and linearity. Whether or not these assumptions were met was analyzed through the Normal P-P diagram and scatter diagram in this study. Scores obtained with the Normal P-P diagram in Figure 1 do not deviate much from the vertical linear route drawn from left bottom to right top. According to the scatter diagram in Figure 2, the standardized residual values distribute in the form of a rectangular and gather around a certain center. Based on these two indicators, it may be said that the data obtained in the study meet the assumptions of normality and linearity which are necessary for hierarchical multiple regression analysis. The fact that the coefficient of skewness (-.127) for the scores of intercultural sensitivity levels was within the range of +1 and -1 (Büyüköztürk 2010) may be regarded as evidence that normality assumption is met.
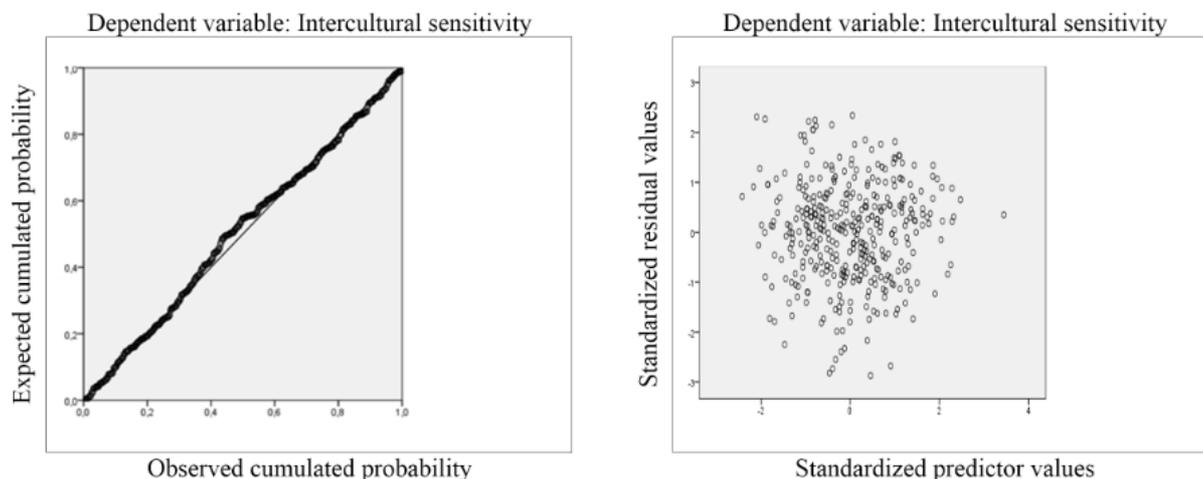
**Figure 1:** *Normal P-P Diagram*   **Figure 2:** *Scatter Diagram*

## 3. Findings

Table 3 shows the hierarchical multiple regression analysis results determining the extent to which intercultural sensitivity levels are predicted by the sub-factors of empathetic tendency after the effects of such variables as properties representing the majority culture in terms of ethnicity, native language, and belief, and the levels of political conservatism are controlled.

**Table 3:** *The Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Results for the Prediction of Intercultural Sensitivity Levels.*

| Model | Predictive variables | R | $R^2$ | $\Delta R^2$ | F | df | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Representing the majority culture in terms of ethnicity, native language, and belief; and the level of political conservatism | 0.305 | 0.093 | 0.093 | 9.487* | 4/371 | 0.000 |
| 2 | Representing the majority culture in terms of ethnicity, native language, and belief, the level of political conservatism, and empathetic tendency, egocentric tendency and sympathetic tendency | 0.488 | 0.238 | 0.145 | 16.441* | 7/368 | 0.000 |

As is clear from Table 3, two different models were obtained so as to determine prospective primary school teachers' levels of intercultural sensitivity. The first model contained representing the majority culture in terms of ethnicity, native language and political conservatism level as the predictive variable. According to the $R^2$ value obtained in consequence of hierarchical multiple regression analysis, it was found that the proportion of these variables' predicting prospective primary school teachers' levels of intercultural sensitivity was 9.3%. At the second stage of hierarchical multiple regression analysis, with the analysis of empathetic tendency, egocentric tendency and sympathetic tendency, the proportion rose to 23.8%. According to the $\Delta R^2$ value obtained in the second model- having controlled the effects of the variables of representing the majority culture in terms of ethnicity, native language, and belief- the variables of empathetic tendency, egocentric tendency and sympathetic tendency were able to account for prospective teachers' levels of intercultural sensitivity at the rate of 14.5%. Both the first [$F_{(4, 371)}=9.487$, $p<.001$] and the second models $F_{(7, 368)}=16.441$, $p<.001$] obtained in this study in consequence of hierarchical multiple regression analysis were able to predict significantly the levels of intercultural sensitivity.

Table 4 shows the B values indicating the unique contributions of each independent variable to prospective primary school teachers' levels of intercultural sensitivity and the significance levels of those values.

**Table 4:** *The Unique Contributions of Independent Variables to Intercultural Sensitivity Levels.*

| | B | Standard Error | β | t | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Representing the Majority culture in terms of ethnicity | -.237 | .055 | -.244 | -4.323 | .000 |
| Representing the Majority culture in terms of native language | .096 | .051 | .107 | 1.888 | .060 |
| Representing the Majority culture in terms of belief | -.122 | .059 | -.100 | -2.058 | .040 |
| The level of political conservatism | -.099 | .025 | -.193 | -3.943 | .000 |
| Empathetic tendency | .246 | .046 | .265 | 5.349 | .000 |
| Egocentric tendency | -.162 | .034 | -.225 | -4.737 | .000 |
| Sympathetic tendency | .013 | .030 | .021 | .426 | .670 |

According to Table 4, the variable of representing the majority culture in terms of native language and the variable of sympathetic tendency do not have unique and significant contributions to the second model which was obtained in relation to the prediction of prospective primary school teachers' levels of intercultural sensitivity ($p<.05$). The variables of representing the majority culture with respect to ethnicity and belief, political conservatism levels and empathetic and egocentric tendencies, on the other hand, have unique and significant contributions to the second model ($p<.05$). Considering the B values obtained in relation to the independent variables, it may be said that one unit of increase to occur in the variable of representing the majority culture in terms

of ethnicity would lead to .237 units of decrease in the level of intercultural sensitivity. Besides, it can also be stated that one unit of increase to be observed in the variable of representing the majority culture in terms of belief would lead to .122 units of decrease in the levels of intercultural sensitivity, one unit of increase in the levels of political conservatism would lead to .099 units of decrease in intercultural sensitivity, and one unit of increase in the variable of egocentric tendency would lead to .162 units of decrease in the levels of intercultural sensitivity. And finally, it may also be inferred that one unit of increase to be observed in empathetic tendency would result in .246 units of increase in the levels of intercultural sensitivity.

# 4. Discussion

According to the results obtained in this research - which aimed to determine the variables predicting the levels of intercultural sensitivity – individuals' empathetic, sympathetic and egocentric tendencies, their properties representing the majority culture in terms of ethnicity, native language, and belief, and their levels of political conservatism account for 23.8% of their levels of intercultural sensitivity. This is a result which indicates that intercultural sensitivity is a complex concept – as is pointed out by Fuller (2007)- and that there are also several different variables which can influence individuals' levels of intercultural sensitivity. The findings obtained in this study demonstrate that -after controlling effects of the cultural properties representing the majority culture and the level of political conservatism, on intercultural sensitivity- empathetic tendency, sympathetic tendency and egocentric tendency can account for 14.5% of the level of intercultural sensitivity. This finding confirms the view that empathy is a fundamental component in intercultural sensitivity (Chen 1997; Kumlu, Kızılaslan, & Külekçi 2015).

Pederson (1997) found that there were significant positive correlations between empathy and intercultural sensitivity. Jackson (2008) concluded that the more individuals' levels of intercultural sensitivity rose the more did they display empathy. This current study, however, obtained a different result for the direction of the correlations between these two variables, and accordingly, it was found that empathetic tendency predicted the level of intercultural sensitivity. On analyzing in terms of sub-factors, it is generally thought that both empathetic and sympathetic tendency can predict in a manner as to raise intercultural sensitivity but it was actually found that that only empathetic tendency can predict the levels of intercultural sensitivity significantly. This might have stemmed from the fact that the basic components of empathy were affective like intercultural sensitivity, and that the basic components of sympathy were cognitive. Besides, the fact that the effects of empathy on attitudinal behaviors were direct and that the effects of sympathy were indirect (Escalas & Stem 2003) might have led to this result. Apart from that, while empathy only requires understanding a perspective, sympathy requires agreeing with that perspective (Chismar 1988). Yet, in order to display appropriate behaviors according to intercultural sensitivity in different cultural environments, it is adequate to understand the relevant cultural perspectives through empathy. It is unnecessary for this to agree with these cultural perspectives. Vaish, Carpenter and Tomasello (2009) point out that sympathy emerges when other individuals are in difficult situations. Being different culturally, on the other hand, is not perceived as a difficult situation for individuals facing the relevant culture. Setting out from all these, it should be pointed out that it is not surprising that no correlations were found between sympathetic tendency and intercultural sensitivity.

Egocentric tendency predicts intercultural sensitivity, as has been estimated in this study. Intercultural sensitivity decreases in parallel with the increase in egocentric tendency. Reduction in intercultural sensitivity caused by egocentric tendency may be related to the fact that this tendency causes an ethnocentric tendency in individuals with low intercultural sensitivity because ethnocentric individuals perceive their own culture as the center of reality in line with egocentric perspective (Bennett 2004). Such individuals are also egocentric individuals in terms of group self-centeredness, and they have negative thoughts against outsiders (Bizumic & Duckitt 2007). Intercultural sensitivity, however, requires that individuals approach reality in multiple cultural perspectives not only in their own perspective and that they do not have negative feelings against different cultures.

This study has found that properties representing the majority culture in terms of ethnicity and belief predict intercultural sensitivity significantly. Accordingly, as individuals represent the majority culture in terms of ethnicity and belief, their levels of intercultural sensitivity decrease. It is thought that one of the basic reasons for this is that individuals of majority culture go through the process of single culture socialization without experiencing the perspectives of the minority culture. As Hammer, Bennet, and Wiseman (2003) point out, individuals going through the single cultural process of socialization can have access to only their cultural perspectives, and can be inadequate in interpreting the differences between their cultural perspective and the perspectives of individuals coming from other cultures. This situation can result in the lack of improvement in individuals' levels of intercultural sensitivity and immediate need or pressure pushing towards cultural adaptation.

Properties representing the majority culture in terms of ethnicity and belief were able to account for the levels of intercultural sensitivity in this study, but properties representing the majority culture in terms of native language could not predict significantly the levels of intercultural sensitivity. This result might have stemmed from the fact that native language was not a distinguishing property for the participants in this study. The reason for this is that the native language of the majority culture can also be the native language of some individuals in the minority culture in communities where minority cultures and the majority culture have certain levels of acculturation. Thus, the research conducted by KONDA (2006) in Turkey found that the native language of those individuals who did not identify themselves as Turk in terms of ethnicity could also be Turkish besides those who identified themselves as Turk in terms of ethnicity.

The findings obtained in this study have shown as expected that the level of political conservatism could be a predictor of intercultural sensitivity. According to the results, an increase in the levels of individuals' political conservatism causes a reduction in their levels of intercultural sensitivity. An interpretation of this finding may be that properties of political conservative people such as being resistant to changes (Wilson 1973), being afraid of differences (Olson & Kroeger 2001), being opposed to equality (Jost, Napier, Thorisdottir, Gosling, Palfai & Ostafin 2007) and displaying negative behaviors against different groups (Mathews, Levin & Sidanius 2009) can also be valid for intercultural differences.

## 4.1. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study has made an effort to explain intercultural sensitivity with the empathetic tendency. In future studies, efforts can be made to explain intercultural sensitivity with empathy competences. The properties of representing the majority culture used in this study were restricted to ethnicity, native language, and religious belief. Whether or not representing the majority culture with the bond of citizenship can also predict intercultural sensitivity may be analyzed in future studies. This study has considered conservatism only in the political sense. Potential studies in the future can also focus on the effects of religious and cultural conservatism besides political conservatism on intercultural sensitivity.

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