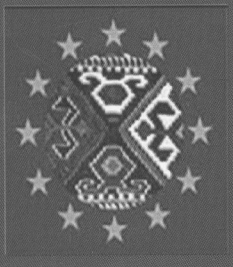
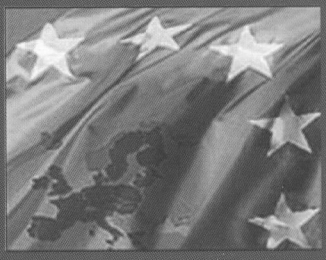
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Dr. İsmail AYDOGAN
Dr. A. Faruk YAYLACI

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EUROPEAN TURKS
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Editors
Dr. İsmail AYDOĞAN
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CONTENT

Oğuz ADANIR **1**
The immigrants those are easy,
difficult, and impossible to educate and integrate into european countries

Kevin SMETS, Philippe MEERS,
Roel Vande WINKEL, Sofie Van BAUWEL **6**
Cinema and diaspora in antwerp: approaches of a Turkish case study

Sophie SERVAIS **15**
"Comfort migration" and comfort in migration: immigrants in Turkey
and immigrants from Turkey: comparative anthropology

Ayşe İŞBILEN , Zahide İMER **30**
A study of Turkish migrant entrepreneurs operating in europe -
the case of garment industry -

Yasemin DASCI **49**
Phenomenon of violence in school in germany and Turkish student`s situation

Vural HOŞGÖRÜR **64**
Reflections on changing nature of education and schools of the future,
and classroom management recommendations for Turkish teachers
educating turkish children in europe

Ülker ŞEN **71**
Turkish and Turkish culture education programs of Turkish children
abroad during adaptation process

Ulvi KESER **84**
A glance at the question of cultural harmony between Turkish people who
emigrated from turkey to Belgium and Belgians in antwerp and mol

Şule ÇİVİTCİ **100**
An investigation of the preferred clothes styles of turkish teenagers
living in Germany

Yasemin ÖZKAN,
Şengül HABLEMİTOĞLU **109**
Identity crisis of Turkish youth in europe: neither Turkish nor german

Sevgi ÇİLİNGİR **123**
Identity and integration in educational activities of Turkish sunni muslim
organizations in britain

Serkan GÜZEL **133**
Cultural integration issues of Turks into european societal life

Şenol YAPRAK **145**
An application for views of Turkish woman working in Germany to work life

Mehmet Emin MUTLU, Salih GÜMÜŞ **157**
Use of virtual classroom technologies in native language education of Turks living in europe

Ozge BURGUT **165**
Turkish integration questioned: the more the merrier in Belgium?

IDENTITY AND INTEGRATION IN EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF TURKISH SUNNI MUSLIM ORGANIZATIONS IN BRITAIN[1]

Sevgi ÇİLİNGİR
Dokuz Eylul University

Introduction

Identity is constructed around the description of the self with reference to an "other". The borders of an identity are drawn on what it is not. The other is what is different from the self. This difference need not be judgmental. However, it is often the case that the other is perceived as foreign, hostile, and threatening.

This is the case for Muslims who have been an "other" for the West in much of its history. What is new in the last decades, all the more evident after 9/11, is that this other has an undeniable, visible presence "within" Western societies, as immigrant communities. As more Muslims live in Western countries with their families, with a different lifestyle, cultural and religious practices and related demands, they have been reconstructed as a problem by the media, public opinion and politicians. Debates on policies of immigration and immigrant incorporation have become heated and changed plane. The issues surrounding Muslim immigrants used to be centered on class. Now the focus is on identity. (Modood, 2005; Rath, et.al., 1999; Kastoryano, 2004; Vertovec and Peach (eds.), 1997, Haddad (ed.), 2002; Fetzer and Soper (eds.), 2004; Boswell, 2003).

There is a general tendency of a securitization of immigration regimes (Sasse, 2005; Demirtaş-Coşkun, 2006) and a retreat from multiculturalism and interactions towards assimilatory policies to incorporate immigrant groups. Advocates of assimilation who question the merits of multiculturalism debate around Muslims.

In Britain, this is a process which accelerated after the events surrounding the Rushdie affair (1989). Muslims have been accused of forming "parallel societies", and are urged to integrate. In some cases, what is meant by integration is in fact assimilation, as integration is described as the approach of the community in question towards the dominant society (McGhee, 2006, 116-120). Immigrants are required to take a citizenship test, which includes questions related to dominant cultural practices that may be contrary to Muslim beliefs (i.e. how to behave in a pub on certain occasions). Muslims' demands for rights and exemptions from law which have been granted to Jews and Sikhs as well as racial and ethnic minorities, are either not met, or provided with strong reservations in lengthy periods, such as "voluntary aided status" that enable state funding to private religious schools. Especially after 9/11 and July 2005 bombings, Muslim men have become the

1 This study was funded by the Jean Monnet Scholarship of the European Commission and conducted with the academic support of Prof. Tariq Modood, Department of Sociology, Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Citizenship, University of Bristol, United Kindom.

frequent target of anti-terrorism legislation that has qualities in breach of basic human rights (Human Rights Watch, 2008; Amnesty International, 2008)

In this context, it is important to understand the ways in which Muslim immigrants preserve and reproduce their ethnic, religious and cultural identity. By protecting their identity, are they forming "parallel societies" that never touch the dominant society or do they integrate to that society, contrary to the general public opinion?

Problem

This study attempts to decipher the approach to and mechanisms of the passing of ethnic/national and religious identity to the new generations by Turkish Sunni Muslims in Britain and to explore its effects on immigrants' socio-political integration. As rooted in the only constitutionally secular country in the Muslim world, how do Turkish Muslim immigrants cope with their existence in a foreign setting? Do they see themselves as part of the host society or do they live culturally secluded lives? Do they perceive Islam as incompatible with Western values as many believe? Migrants and refugees from Turkey and Cyprus have developed different ideological and belief communities in Britain. This study focuses on the identity reproduction through educational activities of Turkish Sunni "Islamic" community organizations in London.

Conceptual Framework

This study approaches immigrant identity, like any identity, as a constructed and interactive phenomenon. The study will approach the identity formation from the viewpoint of immigrants, by looking at their manifestations of identity in general and in specific educational activities. As part of assimilation theory, the concept of acculturation has been criticized mainly of over-simplification of the immigrant and receiving society culture, union-linearity and union-dimensionality (see Alba and Nee, 1997:834). The ongoing criticism and attempts of revival are proof of its power in understanding immigrants' adaptation. For example, following Mead's theory of "symbolic internationalism", Sbutani and Kwan (1965) have reformed assimilation theory by underlining the importance of "social distance" as an outcome of cognitive classification and resulting "stratification" of ethnic communities and hypothesized the link between social distancing on structural assimilation (Alba and Nee: 838). Classification, if it leads to exclusion, would severely limit immigrant community integration through inclusion and involvement in host society institutions and inhibit immigrant individuals' participation even in cases which they do not identify themselves as part of their community.

Berry (1997) has further reformed the concept by taking acculturation as a combination of integration processes working on separate domains (i.e. language, identity, attitudes, values), multidimensional approaches to acculturation like Berry's, have approached to grasp the complexity of the individual (van Oudenhoven, et.al., 2006; 640-641). Acculturation scholars have also sought to overcome the model's limitation in viewing acculturation as one of "...either

ethnic maintenance or assimilation" by taking ethnic identity of the immigrant and his/her identification with the host society as two separate domains (Gong, 2007:506).

Based on this separation, Berry divided acculturation strategies of the immigrants into four, depending on (a) the importance of one's cultural identity and (b) positive relations with the host society: (1) integration (both), (2) assimilation (only relations with host society), (3) separation (only cultural identity) and (4) marginalization (neither). Berry and others also took account of the acculturation strategies of the members of host society, i.e. the Interactive Acculturation Model of Bourhis et.al. (1997)2. There have been attempts to explore the "matching" of host society and immigrant approaches to acculturation, such as one on Dutch society by Van Ouderhoven, et.al. (1998). The results showed that the native population favored assimilation while they believed that immigrants (Turks and Moroccans) preferred separation, while these groups in fact opted for integration on Berry's scheme (Van Ouderhoven, et.al., 2006; 641-642).

The study seeks to find out which of the acculturation strategies explained above fits the identity formation of the Turkish Sunni Muslim community in Britain as revealed in their educational activities for the community. In line with aforementioned approaches, perceptions about the host society framework and self-identification of the group are both considered.

Methodology

The study is based on qualitative methodology. The analyses are based mainly on in depth interviews about perceptions and attitudes on identity and integration among Turkish Sunni Muslims who are involved in the planning or conduct of educational activities of related community organizations. Five organizations, including participating in this study cover all major religious groups among the Turkish Sunni Muslim community, most of which have transnational links. The participating organizations were those of the Diyanet (Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs), Milli Görüş, Mahmud Hoca group, and the Süleymancı and Gülen communities. One of the organizations is an educational foundation with a full-time private school as well as part-time education activities. The others run supplementary schools along with other religious and/or social services for the community.

The interviews took place between May-October 2008. At least three respondents were contacted from each organization. 17 interviews were conducted with respondents of various professions, educational backgrounds, terms of residence, and are of both sexes. In addition to the personal and organizational attitudes and approaches revealed in the interviews, youth activities aimed at, and educational material used for the teaching of ethnic and religious knowledge and values were reviewed. The findings are supported by 23 complementary interviews with individuals from community newspapers, local government, other Turkish or Muslim community organizations and academics working on the field.

2 The authors of this model argue that host state policies of immigrant integration have a decisive impact in the acculturation strategy outcome for immigrants as well as the majority of the host society. Bourhis, et.al. (1997)

Findings

The interviewees were asked three groups of questions:

1- The host society framework: Rights and freedoms related to religious and cultural practices, the state of discrimination and harassment as Muslims, immigrants or Turks, perceptions about whether British society is inclusive of their community.

2- Community: Respondents' own assessment of community problems and solutions provided by the organization itself or demanded from British institutions.

3-Identity and integration: The articulation of ethnic and religious identity in respondents' discourse and in educational activities, level of integration of the community as perceived by the respondents and their assessment of the relationship between religious and ethnic identity and integration.

The host society framework

All of the respondents found Britain as a country where people can enjoy their religious rights and freedoms. Britain was said to be tolerant of difference with no counterpart in Europe - including Turkey. This was attributed to the rootedness of democracy and tradition of coexistence with other cultures in the colonial period. For example, in the period following 9/11, whereas Milli Görüş organization was banned in Germany, the Süleymancı community was permitted to build a big mosque in London and Prince Charles attended the opening ceremonies. The call for prayer can be broadcasted two times a day. There were few accounts of discrimination and harassment because of race, ethnicity or religion. Some respondents attributed this to the multicultural environment of London and districts in which Turkish community is concentrated, while others related it with the racial appearance and relatively western clothing preferred by most o the community. As the overwhelming majority of Muslims in Britain are of Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin, Turkish Muslims are not subjected to the same stereotypes. Another reason stated was the absence of extremists or terrorists of Turkish origin. While the respondents acknowledged the rising Islam phobia, their experience as a group does not reflect direct exclusion. They also found Britishness as an identity inclusive of different ethnic and religious backgrounds. Nonetheless, most have noted a "subtle" racism as prevalent among the dominant society.

Community

The arrival of Turkish speaking communities in Britain dates back to late 1950's. However, the majority of Sunni Muslims from mainland Turkey have settled since the 1990's (Küçükcan, 1999:61). Lack of data from the census makes it difficult to determine the number. The estimates vary between 150.000 and 400.000, with a high concentration in and around London (Muslim Council of Britain, 2008; Turkish Consulate, 2008; Federation of Turkish Associations in the UK, 2008). Turks are concentrated in four neighboring districts in Northeast London. Businesses are currently clustered in a few areas close to settlement and in a few trades such as supermarkets, restaurants, kebab shops and dry cleaning, suggesting the existence of an enclave economy (Struder, 2003, 12, 24-27). The level of religiosity

is lower than that of Muslims of South Asian origin. According to the estimates by the respondents, the total number of Turks who are following Muslims range between 10.000-30.000.

Unemployment, poverty or issues directly related to poverty such as health and housing were stated by some respondents among the main problems of the community. Almost all respondents, from all of the organizations involved in the study, referred to educational underachievement as the main problem of the community or the youth.

Educational achievement among immigrant's children is usually lower than the dominant population. This is the case for Turkish immigrants in the Netherlands, observed in drop-out rates and later unemployment (Van de Werfhorst and Tubergen, 2008, 396). Immigrant youth of Turkish origin in Britain also has the problems of truancy, low grades, low level of continuation to higher education and a general lack of career expectations for their future (Enneli et.al, 2005, 9-10, 13-18).

In educational achievement by various measures, Turkish children have scored the lowest among 13 ethnic groups in Hackney in the past 15 years. This result was quoted by a number of respondents, with the note of "even below Somalians and Ethiopians". The particularly disturbing thing about this problem seemed not to be the underachievement per se, or underachievement compared to the host society majority. Rather, it was the lagging behind of other ethnic and racial groups that upset the interviewees. One respondent described refugees from Africa as people coming from the most deprived regions of the world, incomparable to Turkey, yet, they "...passed us. We have to pass the Somalians." (Süleymancı community, coordinator)

The respondents' reasoning of underachievement was one sided, turned to the community itself to blame. They did not criticize the school system or the teachers. Their explanation centered on the competence of parents, rather than economic conditions of the family. They think that most of the Turkish speaking community is of low educational level. To provide better education to their children would bring upward mobility. However, the parents lack the ability (parents' proficiency in English and knowledge of the school system in the country) and interest (they either have to work long hours or prefer to concentrate on making money, therefore leaving less time for looking after the child and supporting his schooling). The end result is that a family owns houses, cars, but their children end up working in kebab sector. The statement below has been made by most respondents from organizations with educational activities with slight variance:

...The child comes from school; he sees there's nobody home. He sits by the TV or starts playing a computer game. The mother comes, shouts "haven't you done this and that!" he gets shouted at. Then the father comes, the child is watching something on TV. When the father comes...takes the remote in his hand, [watches Turkish channels], then the child locks himself in his room, falls asleep or lives through whatever it is in his inner world. How many educated children can you

expect from such a family? As a community, we are lazy. We don't understand the language of our children. You came here, why don't you learn English in the first place? The child brings a paper [from school], makes them sign, they don't know what they are signing about. We are that backward, unfortunately. (Milli Görüş, director)

For all of the youth problems, including education, many respondents mentioned the "bad influence of the environment" and the inability of the parents to counter its effects. The result is the child to be "without aims", not interested in education, having too much leisure time without supervision, not knowing who he is, not embracing Turkish and Islamic values, thus vulnerable to outside influences in the neighborhood and around the school. Loss of values associated with Islam and assimilation among the second generation was mentioned as one of the basic problems of the Turkish community by most respondents, which they sought to solve through their educational activities.

Identity and integration

As revealed by the respondents' accounts of social, economic and political life and problems of the community, Turkish Muslims live in a relative state of isolation. One respondent said that it is possible to live in London without speaking a single word in English. The neighborhood provides all necessary goods by Turkish shop owners and in instances that require interaction with hot society institutions such as marriage, judicial cases and healthcare, community organizations provide assistance including translation. As one respondent complained:

Why doesn't he step out of the kebab shop? Why doesn't he become a scientist? Get out of your shell, don't keep living in the village, you are at one of the capitals of the world, if you show yourself here, the world will see you. His Turkish is broken, his English is broken, and he sends his son to the coffee shop, instead of the school… (Milli Görüş, director)

This is a situation all organizations seek to change. Integration was the intended result for the community and the most important means to provide integration was stated as "education", which all of the respondents emphasized as the most important function of their organization.

The respondents were asked to define "good integration". All respondents emphasized that it was not assimilation, which they viewed as a problem as important as isolation. Good integration was viewed as participation in and interaction with the host society without losing beliefs and culture of the group:

…to raise individuals who contributes to the society he lives in. Who knows where he came from, where he is going to, who respects, understands the society he lives in, who, not only minds his own business, but puts forward the good of the society. By knowing one's self, I don't only mean religious values, not only because I am a Muslim, if he is Jamaican, then Jamican values. (Gülen community school, principal)

As it was argued that there is a need to preserve one's own identity, what did that identity mean for Turkish Sunni Muslims? The respondents used the word "us" to mean Turkish Muslims or people from Turkey, excluding Kurdish nationalists and the Cypriot community, most of which were reported to be "assimilated".

On the question of whether Islam lived in Turkey is different than in other countries, there were mixed results: Either that Islam is one and the same everywhere and if Islam in Turkey is different that means it is not really Islam, or that it is natural to have cultural differences and interpretation differences.

Islam is perceived as one and same for all Muslims, as almost all of the respondents expressed in the context of perception of Muslims, "British Islam", anti-terrorism measures, evaluation of other Muslim communities, or issues related to integration. None of the respondents prioritized ethnic or religious identity. These were perceived as complementary. Respondents from Milli Görüş and Gülen communities emphasized the Ottoman legacy as the exemplary experience of Islam. Mahmud Hoca group and Süleymancı emphasize the Ottoman legacy indirectly, through the choice of historical sites in their cultural trips to Turkey.

The educational activities are the main source of passing of both national culture and religion. All organizations with supplementary schools try to give both religious and national consciousness through their taught programs and supplementary activities (watching national football games, socializing with Turkish-Muslim peers, cultural trips to Turkey where they visit Islamic monuments, knowledge competitions where they are asked questions about Turkish history). Celebration of important national and religious events is also means for preserving culture. Diyanet additionally teaches Ottoman handcrafts and plans to open a course for a Sufi musical instrument.

The educational material provided by Mahmud Hoca group, Süleymancı community and Diyanet also show how identity is transmitted to the next generation. For Turkish language, all organizations use Turkish national education ministry publications and teachers are provided by the Turkish state. For religious education, they use material approved by the Turkish Diyanet plus books in English. All used the same children's book about the life of Prophet Mohammed. One respondent from Süleymancı community said that they keep "Turkish classics" in their library and give handouts from these works. The names he mentioned were important writers from the late Ottoman and Early Republican periods known for their Islamic-conservative ideological stance.

Discussion

As the dominant society perceives the Muslim immigrant as a threatening "other", it is no less the case for the group in question. Situated in a foreign environment with different social systems and values that do not welcome their presence, it is only natural for immigrant groups to resist assimilation and seek to embrace their own community, culture and belief, which is transmitted to the next generations through education by the community itself.

According to Rex, "the structure of the private domain amongst immigrant communities includes extended kinship extending back into a homeland, a network of associations and a system of religious organization and belief. This structure provides a valuable meaning in an impersonal society of providing a home and source of identity for individuals" (1986, 29). The organizations used in this study perform this function, as they are extensions of homeland-based transnational or local Islamic communities with clashing interests in Turkey and countries in Europe. Nonetheless, when it comes to attitudes, opinions, concerns, practices, strategies in Britain, there are no discernible differences among the Turkish Sunni Muslim communities/organizations. The separateness of the organizations rests on their networks or communities rather than opinions, values and most educational strategies.

Assimilation was seen as a negative outcome by the respondents, pertaining to a loss. Especially for groups who are relatively disadvantaged like the case of Turkish Muslims, loss of homeland-based values are not compensated with host society acceptance, and the result may be marginalization.

All respondents argued that one's group identity, rooted in the belief and culture of the homeland, must be preserved for successful integration. This position of the respondents were in line with the proposition of social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1986), that the advantages of belonging to a group, gives the feeling of security, increases self-esteem and contributes to the healthy development of the youth (see Vedder and Virta, 2005). This theme is also called as "ethnicity paradox" as coined by Robert Park and W.I.Thomas, referring to the prioritization of ethnic identity in foreign country setting as a helpful factor for prohibiting individuals' isolation and empowering them as a group, leading to long term integration (Modood, 2005, 109-110).

Conclusion

The Turkish Sunni Muslims in Britain display a state of separation (preserving cultural identity while having no positive relations with the host society) in Berry's aforementioned acculturation scheme. For the second generation youth, there is a risk of marginalization as stated by the respondents in the context of youth problems. However, integration is desired and promoted by community organizations through their educational activities which seek to teach and cultivate Turkish and Islamic values. These values are not perceived as uncomplimentary with British social order and are not utilized for demanding rights. Despite that the current level of integration among Turkish Sunni Muslims in Britain is low, residing in a non-Muslim/foreign country or British identity itself are not perceived as incompatible with Turkish and Muslim identity or values. As the arrival of Sunni Muslims from mainland Turkey in Britain is more recent than the presence of Turks in other European countries, the second generation is yet to develop. Turkish Sunni Muslim organizations perceive Turkish ethnic and Islamic religious identity as complementary. They prioritize the education of Turkish youth with both ethnic and religious values as a means to prevent assimilation and provide successful integration, with the hope to raise "role models" who are confident, proud, and contributing to the society in which they live.

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