The Integration of Descendants of Migrants from Turkey in Stockholm

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The Integration of Descendants of Migrants from Turkey in Stockholm: The TIES Study in Sweden. 

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This report is the result of a study about descendants of migrants from Turkey in Sweden as part of an international research project entitled ‘Integration of the European Second Generation’ (TIES). The objective of the project is to investigate the integration process of the descendants of migrants from Turkey, the former Yugoslavia and Morocco in various fields, including education, the labour market, social relations and identity formation in eight European countries. Studies in this area, irrespective of whether they are national or international, qualitative or quantitative, often erroneously treat migrants and their descendants as a homogenous category. In this study the heterogeneity of the target category emerges both in analysis and interpretation. The heterogeneity of ‘migrants’ and their descendants is often made invisible, a trend that is even more noticeable in international comparative studies than in one-country studies (Crul & Heering 2008; Crul, Schneider & Lelie 2012).

TIES is one of the first systematic cross-national studies of descendants of migrants from one country with similar starting positions. The International Comparative Studies of Ethnocultural Youth (ICSEY) project studied the integration of migrant and minority youth aged thirteen to eighteen years in a range of West European countries, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the USA (Berry, Phinney, Sam & Vedder 2006; Sam & Berry 2006). The TIES survey focuses on an older age category. The Swedish TIES study focuses on a single category, the descendants of migrants from Turkey. The majority of migrants from Turkey came to the TIES partner countries as labour migrants in the 1960s. This focus allows us to compare one of the largest groups of descendants of migrants in several European countries.

In order to facilitate comparison between the various countries studied in the project, a common questionnaire was devised to elicit comparable empirical data in the partner countries. Data were collected through an interview-based common questionnaire. Each structured face-to-face interview lasted approximately one hour. It is, however, important to stress that the questionnaire was slightly modified in each of the partner countries to meet the special conditions and interests of the different countries. The TIES survey, with its comprehensive questionnaire covering different
domains of young people's lives, contains information not available in register data.

The empirical context of the TIES project included the following countries and cities: France (Paris and Strasbourg), Germany (Berlin and Frankfurt), Spain (Madrid and Barcelona), Austria (Vienna and Linz), the Netherlands (Amsterdam and Rotterdam), Switzerland (Zurich and Basle) and Sweden (Stockholm). Thus, large cities rather than countries have been the primary focus of data collection. In almost all large cities, the focus has been on the situation for young descendants of migrants from Turkey. For the purpose of comparison, a reference group comprised of young adults of native parentage from the specific city has also been included.

Although all these countries are European welfare states, they represent different types of welfare models. Sweden, for example, is characterised by strong state commitment and involvement in the welfare regime (the Scandinavian welfare model), which provides and guarantees its citizens a safety net in terms of income in comparison with the 'continental' welfare model of France and Spain (Esping-Andersen 2002), which is less efficient than the Scandinavian model in dealing with social exclusion. Esping-Andersen sees Spain and other Southern European countries as significant variants of the 'continental' model. France’s welfare provisions (e.g. support for families, pre-school provision, etc.) are more similar to those of Scandinavia than those of Spain.

In addition, all these countries have different political structures vis-à-vis migration and the incorporation of migrants. These different institutional frameworks relate, among other things, to the reception and inclusion of migrants, and thus make up contextual differences in the TIES partner countries. This is evident, for example, at the institutional level, in how educational systems are organised in the participating countries. It is assumed (as will be made evident later in the project’s theoretical perspective) that this has an impact on the performance of the descendants of migrants in the different TIES partner countries. Furthermore, all the partner countries have different labour migration histories, although all the partner countries had relatively large labour inflows from Turkey until the labour migration policy was annulled in virtually all countries in question. Yet migration from Turkey (as evident in chapter 2) did not stop with the annulment of labour migration to Sweden, but continued in different forms, namely through family reunion and asylum seeking. It is noteworthy that the socioeconomic background of the latest group diverges radically from that of the previous migrants (see chapter 2).
A note on our terminology

Several terminological issues need to be sorted out before presenting and analysing the empirical data. These issues are mainly about how we refer to the respondents participating in this study. Basically, we would like to clarify four central points:

1. the concept of generation;
2. the question of age;
3. the issue of ethnicity;
4. the migration perspective.

All four points pertain to how we refer to and attribute categories when clustering our respondents in statistical analyses and presentations.

Generations

The Swedish TIES project studies the descendants of migrants from Turkey. The TIES consortium uses the term ‘second generation’. We have opted to use the general term ‘descendants of migrants from Turkey’ because we consider this to be the most appropriate, correct and neutral categorisation. There are three main reasons why we reject the TIES ‘second generation’ terminology.

First, these children were born in Sweden. It is therefore logically erroneous to ascribe migrant status to them. They have no personal first-hand experience of migration. If the term ‘generation’ should be employed at all, the correct classification would be ‘first-generation descendants (of migrants)’. It would therefore not be wrong in logical terms to refer to their children as ‘second-generation descendants (of migrants)’.

Second, different definitions of ‘second generation’, i.e. the descendants of migrants, have been used in earlier research carried out in Sweden. In the 1970s the term ‘second generation’ included all children born in Sweden and those who migrated before twelve years of age. Therefore, it is not possible to compare the results over time since the target group is not the same. Today, the ‘second generation’ migrants as understood in the TIES project are found within the category of ‘young people of migrant background’. Although this is the politically correct term, it is not the most appropriate one because it also includes young people born abroad. In our opinion, the conceptualisation of the ‘1.5 generation’ to refer to preschool children who migrated with their parents is a very dubious metaphor.

Third, and most importantly, in Sweden the terminology alluding to ‘second-generation migrants’ is politically incorrect. Migrant organisations,
who were highly critical of this terminology, which was widely used by practitioners and researchers alike up until the mid-1990s, drew attention to it, saying: passing on ‘migrant status’ to generations born in the country is in effect to cement a socio-political division in society. It is politically wrong to set these young people apart from their peers. Today it is generally accepted by all practitioners, researchers and politicians (with the possible exception of the nationalist Sweden Democrats party) that to refer to children of migrant parents as ‘second-generation migrants’ is to prolong migrant status unnecessarily, and thus to render integration more difficult. While we do need to carry out research on the situation for the descendants of migrants in order to facilitate full civic incorporation in society, as researchers we need to be aware of the disadvantageous consequences of uncritically using problematic ‘scientific’ conceptualisations.

Age, life-course classification and methodological grouping

The survey examines the status of descendants of migrants from Turkey between the ages of eighteen and 35 years. This means that the respondents were adults when they answered the questionnaire. Obviously they were young adults, although the oldest respondents were on the threshold of middle age. Occasionally we refer to the respondents as ‘children’ in certain questions and passages of the text that clearly pertain to childhood experiences. A more impersonal, perhaps technical term is offspring, which we do not use. We have settled on ‘descendant’ as the most appropriate and neutral term.

This group, or to be precise this age category (eighteen to 35), is compared in the survey analyses with a similar category of young people of the same age span of native Swedish parentage. This second group may be understood in terms of classical research design as a ‘control group’. In effect, it is a comparison group. We have settled on the term ‘reference group’. When we cluster data on the respondents who are descendants of migrants we speak of the ‘target group’. In all our tables target group data are presented in columns to the left and reference group data in columns to the right.

Ethnicity

Our sample consists of an equal number of respondents who are descendants of migrants from Turkey and respondents of native Swedish parentage. Obviously the comparison of target and reference groups involves an ethnic dimension. However, the problem we face is that respondents belonging to
the target group embrace three different ethnicities − ethnic Turks, Kurds and Syriacs (Syriani/.Assyrian Suryoyo-speaking Christians) − which are linked to highly different migration histories. The parents of these respondents were all born in Turkey, but they are not all of Turkish ethnicity. A majority of the Kurds and Syriacs have Swedish citizenship today. We avoid the adjective Turkish, except in passages where it is quite clear that it refers to the community of ethnic Turks. Ethnicity is not registered in the Swedish census data. Sampling is done by information that is registered: country of birth, parents’ country of birth, former citizenship, and present citizenship. In the sampling procedure there is no way we can single out people of ethnic Turkish background or origin. We have informed the TIES consortium about this methodological issue. We do not know if other receiving countries with large populations of migrants and their descendants with a background in Turkey face the same problem. One of our principal findings, however, is that the young people in our target group experience very different avenues to integration related to their particular ethnic origin as Turks, Kurds or Syriacs.

Migration and migrants

The term ‘immigrant’, which in its Swedish form reads invandrare, was introduced into official and legal terminology in the late 1960s, replacing the earlier legal term ‘foreigner’. Initially a term with a welcoming positive touch to it, the term ‘immigrant’ has since acquired a negative ring. It is gradually being shifted out of official (legal, political, demographic, etc.) terminology. Moreover, the term immigrant presents the perspective of the receiving country, referring to persons coming ‘in’ to settle. Similarly, the term ‘emigrant’ represents the perspective of the country that is left. We have chosen to use the neutral and more general terms of migration and migrants.

We are aware that we are departing from the terminology recommended by the TIES consortium, in particular when it comes to the ‘second generation’ concept. However, this project was financed by the Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research. We are abiding by the Council’s ethical rules in not using politically incorrect terminology.

Integration or incorporation?

Integration is a concept that appears in the discourse on migrant incorporation. Several understandings exist, some more sociological in nature, others more in the field of social psychology.
1. In its most general sense, integration pertains to the relationship between a whole and its parts. Integration is said to prevail when the parts are in accord with the whole. Within sociology the relationship between the whole (of society) and its parts is referred to as social cohesion. Integration as social cohesion has been studied not only with regard to society as a whole, but also with regard to clearly defined sections of society – for instance, social groups, institutions, organisations, etc.

Classical sociologists were concerned with the issue of social cohesion. Durkheim’s (1984) famous analysis of mechanical and organic solidarity was precisely about this issue. Integration in this sociological sense is a property of the social system as a whole (usually society) and not of its individual parts (individual persons or groups). It is a systemic (and hence relational) property. Society (or some subsystem under scrutiny) – not its parts – is more or less (well) integrated. The concept of integration also has a supranational usage, as when the EU discusses European integration in the sense of both cohesion and harmonisation of laws, regulations and practices.

2. Another understanding of the societal concept of integration focuses on the participation of cultural and ethnic minorities and persons of migrant origin in various crucial public domains of mainstream society, such as the educational system, the labour market, political institutions, etc. (Díaz 1993), without pressure to suppress, conceal or abandon deeply felt personal convictions and ways of being in one’s personal and private life. This is in contrast to the concept of assimilation, which combines participation in the public sphere with adjustment to, acceptance of and identification with the dominant cultural values and norms of society, thus affecting central beliefs and mores of one’s private life.

Berry (1992), a Canadian social psychologist, proposed a matrix defined by two dimensions of identification – identifying with majority culture or not, and identifying with minority culture or not. Integration is defined as identification with both majority and minority culture. In Berry’s model assimilation is about identifying only with majority culture, while separation pertains to identification with the minority culture. Berry described the category corresponding to non-identification with both options as marginalisation. Berry’s operationalisation of this conceptual model has proven to be very useful for empirical analyses.

A similar but more sociological model places the emphasis on participation rather than on identification. Integration corresponds to participation in crucial domains of both majority and minority culture, assimilation is about participation mainly in majority culture, while participation that is mainly confined to minority culture is termed segregation. The fourth
alternative – non-participation in both of the main options – is tentatively referred to as creolisation of culture, a mixing of cultural forms, from which a new, syncretic blend of culture develops.

3. A slightly different sociological approach is found in Gordon’s (1964) model of the assimilation process through which migrants gradually extend their participation to new spheres of mainstream society. Economic integration is achieved through participation in the workforce, which is the domain of integration that migrants usually encounter first. Language integration may follow, when a migrant learns to manage the requirements of everyday life in the language of mainstream society. Social integration, implying that the migrant socialises across ethnic and cultural boundaries and participates in informal networks and organisations, usually requires some proficiency in the language of the dominant society. Political integration implies participation in political life, for example acquiring party membership, voting in elections, and for some, nomination as candidates for election. This presupposes participation in social networks. Active political participation usually implies that the person concerned has been naturalised as a citizen of the country. Residential integration is when one's dwellings are not determined by ethnic or cultural conditions, that is when discriminatory mechanisms on the housing market are not decisive, or in other words, when residential segregation does not apply. Family integration applies when marriage does not follow strictly ethnic or cultural ties, that is to say when we have exogamy. When family integration is achieved as the last domain of integration in a long process, Gordon refers to this as assimilation.

As we see, the same words are given somewhat different meanings according to the various models describing the process of migrants' incorporation in a host society. This makes for conceptual confusion, particularly with regard to the concept of integration. For instance, a cultural and ethnic minority existing as a relatively isolated and autonomous enclave in society may be well integrated in itself (according to the interpretation of integration as cohesion of a whole with its parts) but nevertheless lack participation in such domains of mainstream society as its economy, working life and political institutions. The Amish, to illustrate this point, form a community that is well-integrated within itself, while having scant participation in and interaction with American mainstream society. So a segregated community may be an integrated community. It all depends on the level of analysis.

One solution to this conceptual problem is to say social cohesion when this is the issue at stake, or participation if that is what one is interested in, or identification if one is examining individual attitudes, and so forth, rather
than employ the highly ambiguous concept of integration. These other concepts have the advantage of being closer to empirical operationalisation than the concept of integration. If, by integration, we mean the general process of incorporating migrants and their descendants into mainstream society, we would prefer to use the concept of incorporation. It is less ambiguous than integration as a sociological conception. To incorporate is ‘to take into or include as part of a mass or whole; to combine or unite into one body or whole; blend; mix’ (Webster’s Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language). However, as the international research project and the TIES network includes the word ‘integration’ in its name (Integration of the European Second Generation), we have maintained the word in the title of this report. When we refer to ‘integration’ in the text it is usually in the sense of ‘incorporation’.

The TIES project in Sweden

In the Swedish questionnaire, the following issues were added to elicit knowledge about interesting problems that had been exposed by researchers in the past when studying the descendants of migrants from Turkey. We specifically included questions on the respondents’ perception of their health status, trust in the institutions of Swedish society, and the feeling of belonging to different ‘ethnic groups’. The questionnaire was also constructed to take into consideration the variation in institutional arrangements in the field of education. Compared to the other TIES partner countries, the Swedish study had the smallest sample. Our study surveyed 500 people (250 descendants of migrants from Turkey and 250 descendants of native parentage). The decision to focus only on descendants of migrants from Turkey residing in Stockholm was due to the economic constraints inherent in the approved project budget from the funding research council.

In a preceding paragraph we mentioned the methodological problem that we faced due to the fact that by no means all of the people in our sample are ethnic Turks. This is related to the fact that ethnicity is not included as a category in the Swedish census. We had to define our sampling frame as persons born in Turkey, or persons whose parents were born in Turkey. Sweden has had a considerable refugee migration of Kurds who originated in several countries (Iran, Iraq and Syria, but predominantly in Turkey). Sweden has also had a significant chain migration of Syriani/Assyrian migrants from Lebanon and Syria and, above all, South-eastern Turkey. This latter group is Syrian Orthodox Christian and speaks Suryoyo. We refer to this group as Syriacs.
The migration histories of ethnic Turks, Kurds and Syriacs differ. Places of principal settlement in Sweden differ. Views on the Turkish state and its policies differ. Languages differ. Religions differ. We have reason to hypothesise that identities will also differ between these groups, and that patterns of integration will evolve differently for the three groups. In chapter 6 we have made use of this unique opportunity to present a more accurate picture of identities and integration using decomposed data available to us for the three ethnic categories of migrants from Turkey and their descendants.

The actual data collection for the study was carried out by the Swedish National Bureau of Statistics (Statistics Sweden – SCB). The advantage of commissioning the SCB is that it administers the total Population Register and therefore has access to reliable, up-to-date census data. It also has trained and experienced interviewers. The sample focused on persons aged 18–35 years living in Stockholm County and included persons born in Sweden to parents who were born in Turkey (1) and persons born in Sweden to Swedish-born parents (2). First, 250 persons from both groups were selected randomly from the Swedish Population Register (RTB) and the interviewers started to contact the interviewees. Due to the low response rate (43 per cent in all), a second sample was drawn, including 2,250 persons from population 1 and 750 persons from population 2; the difference between the groups was due to differences in the response rate. The earlier sample was excluded to avoid the same persons being selected twice. Once a total of 250 interviews in each population had been conducted the data collection was terminated.

Despite the fact that the response rate in this survey was low, the TIES data were still valuable in providing a thorough description of the outcomes of descendants of migrants from Turkey in the educational system and in the labour market as well as their experience of Swedish society in comparison with the reference group of people of native parentage. Statistics Sweden computed weighted data for this sample to compensate for non-response, which blew up the sample to population size. Our estimations are based on both weighted and unweighted data. We have compared these results and reported the differences in the text. Using unweighted data in some of the estimations give different point estimates than weighted data, but the signs are the same without exception. Weighted data were used for the analyses in chapter 7.

In order to assess the reliability of the TIES data, we compared the TIES sample and an administrative dataset, STATIV, which included the entire population living in Sweden at the time of the TIES interviews. From STATIV, we selected all people living in the County of Stockholm between the ages of eighteen and 35 years with both parents born either in Turkey or in Sweden, i.e. identical to the sample frame in the TIES survey.
This comparison revealed differences between the TIES sample and the administrative register, STATIV. Compared to STATIV, the respondents in the TIES interviews are older, the proportion of women is somewhat higher and the parents’ educational level is also somewhat higher. The large differences in educational levels between the respondents in the TIES sample and the STATIV register are of great concern. Individuals in TIES survey are more highly educated than those from the register data of STATIV. For example, the rate of those with primary school as their highest educational level in STATIV is roughly twice that of the TIES respondents. Consequently the TIES sample seems to be a positive selection of individuals.

There are many explanations for the discrepancies between the two datasets. Regarding age and gender, the differences between the datasets probably reflect what has been observed in other surveys, i.e. that men have a lower response rate than women, and young people have a lower response rate than older people. When it comes to education, the discrepancies between the datasets are probably a combination of higher response rates among those with a higher level of education and imprecise information from the respondents in the interviews. For example, it is possible that a respondent might have described an unfinished programme at university as tertiary education, while the registers only include completed courses. It is therefore important to bear in mind that the following empirical chapters describe young men and women who are both older and more highly educated than the population (the sampling frame) from which they were selected.

Theories of incorporation of descendants of migrants

The incorporation of descendants of migrants in North America and Northwestern European countries has attracted much scholarly attention during recent decades. Some scholars argue that the descendants of migrants from non-European countries have great difficulties in assimilating due to their cultural distance, lower level of education and lack of job skills (see, for example, Borjas 1999). This is the prevalent discourse when media report on the situation of descendants of non-European migrants. Empirical results from various studies conducted in both the US and Europe do not confirm this fear and show that despite different incorporation trajectories, they are, by and large, well-integrated into these societies (see, for example, Portes & Rumbaut 2001; Alba & Nee 2003; Crul & Schneider 2010; Crul et al. 2012; Portes & Fernandez-Kelly 2008).
In a more optimistic scenario, other scholars contend that, similar to earlier waves of migration, the new cohort of descendants of migrants will assimilate into the social mainstream. Such a process occurs when they integrate into the common values, practices and language of their new countries (Alba & Nee 1997). These theories emphasise that the outcomes for the assimilation of descendants of new migrants will be diversified, that is, they are likely to become incorporated into the middle and working classes; some, however, will be incorporated into the most marginalised sections of the population in the new environment. But this process, with different options, will produce similar results to those of the descendants of earlier European migrants, that is, a transition into the mainstream. This is because the challenges confronting these young people today are not radically different from those of earlier cohorts (Waldinger & Perlmann 1998).

The last type of theory in this field is known as ‘segmented assimilation’. According to this theory, a majority of the descendants of migrants achieve either middle class or working class status, depending on, among other things, their socioeconomic background (the education and occupational position of their parents), how government policy, civil society and ‘public opinion’ are positive or indifferent towards them, and the historical background of their ethnic minority community. However, a smaller section among these young people with a migrant background is at risk of joining the ‘urban underclass’ in Western societies. This path is labelled by Portes & Rumbaut (2001) as downward assimilation. Indications of this path include early school dropout, unemployment, poverty, criminality and imprisonment. According to this theory, such a career is more probable today than previously because of the harsher climate facing migrants from non-European countries, reduction of labour market opportunities for migrants and their descendants due to the restructuring of the labour market in the West and the successive weakening of welfare institutions in Western countries, which are creating a permanent poor underclass. Difficulties in finding a way to become incorporated in mainstream societies direct these young people to the formation of an ‘oppositional culture’ (Zhou 1997).

How can we describe the incorporation of descendants of migrants from Turkey in Swedish society, based on the empirical results of the Swedish TIES project and in relation to the aforementioned theories? In the following, we briefly present the results of different chapters in this report to determine which of the above-mentioned hypotheses come closest to our results.

This report contains mainly descriptive findings on the main topics of the Swedish TIES survey. More complex and comparative analyses of each
topic will be published on the basis of TIES data. The limitations of data in this survey highlight the need for further research in this field in order to shed more light on the integration of descendants of migrants in European countries.

References

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