TURKISH YOUTH IN THE UK: AN ANALYSIS OF THEIR IDENTITY FORMATION, BELONGING AND PERCEPTIONS OF EUROPE

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Abstract:

This research is about how these Turkish-speaking young people feel about their parent's country of origin, about their own belonging, identity, culture and above all what it means to be British. This research interviewed the young people on their attitudes towards citizenship, nationality, exclusion, cultural values, faith, relationships, social cohesion about their Turkish-British identity and about their European identity. The research draws mainly on the qualitative data from Turkish speaking immigrants with a special reference to young people between the ages of 15 and 24. Eighty-four respondents agreed to give interviews (53 females and 31 males). The sample consisted of forty-eight Turkish, twenty-three Turkish-Kurds and thirteen Turkish-Cypriots.

Key words: Identity, Turkish Youth, UK, Hybrid.

INTRODUCTION

"Where I belong'' is certainly a question that is posed by and for many people who have undergone migration or translocations of different types, whether of national movement or class movement, and is especially true for the children of such people (Yuval-Davis, 2011). It is represented in inter subjective relations by that question so many visible 'outsiders' face (visible either through skin, colour, language, accent or name) about 'where are you really from' and 'where do you really belong' (Floya-Anthias, 2009, p. 45).

This research is about how these Turkish-speaking young people feel about their parent's country of origin, about their own belonging, identity, culture and above all what it means to be British. This research interviewed the young people on their attitudes towards citizenship, nationality, exclusion, cultural values, faith, relationships, social cohesion about their Turkish-British identity and about their European identity. The research draws mainly on the qualitative data from Turkish speaking immigrants with a special reference to young people between the ages of 15 and 24. Eighty-four respondents agreed to give interviews (53 females and 31 males). The

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sample consisted of forty-eight Turkish, twenty-three Turkish-Kurds and thirteen Turkish-Cypriots.

It is important to differentiate belonging and the politics of belonging. Belonging is about emotional or even ontological attachment, about feeling at home. As Hage (1997, p. 41) points out, however 'home is an on-going project entailing a sense of hope for the future (Taylor, 2009). Part of this feeling of hope relates to home as a safe space (Ignatieff, 2001, p. 62). In the daily reality of the early twenty-first century, in so many places on the globe, this emphasis on safety acquires a new poignancy. At the same time it is important to emphasize that feeling 'at home' does not necessarily only generate positive and warm feelings (Hesse, 2000, p. 17).

Belonging tends to be naturalized and to be part of everyday practise (Fenster, 2000, p. 403). It becomes articulated, formally structured and politicized only when it is threatened in some way. The politics of belonging comprise specific political projects aimed at constructing belonging to particular collectivities which are themselves being constructed in these projects in very specific ways and within very specific boundaries (i.e. whether or not, according to specific political projects of belonging, Jews can be considered to be German, for example, or abortion advocates can be considered Catholic) (Yuval-Davis, 2011, p. 36). As Antonsich (2010, p. 644) points out, however these boundaries are often spatial and relate to a specific locality/territoriality and not just to constructions of social collectivities. According to Doreen Massey (2005, p. 221), space in itself is but an embodiment of social networks. As Ulf Hannerz (2002, p. 575) claims, home is essentially a contrastive concept, linked to some notion of what it means to be away from home. It can involve a sense of rootedness in a socio-geographic site or be constructed as an intensely imagined affiliation with a distant locale where self-realization can occur.

Belonging has been one of the major themes around which both classic psychology and sociology emerged. Countless psychological and even more psychoanalytical, works have been dedicated to writings about the fears of separation of babies and children from the womb, from the mother, from the familiar, as well as the devastating effects on them when they cannot take belonging for granted (Rank, 1973, p. 34; Bowlby, 1969, p. 46). Similarly, much of social psychology literature has been dedicated to people's need to conform to the groups they belong to for fear of exclusion and inferiorization and the ways people's interpersonal relationships are deeply affected by their membership or lack of membership of particular groups as well as their positions in these groups (Lewin, 1948, p. 28; Billig, 1976, p. 20; Tajfel, 1982, p. 39).

People can belong in many different ways and to many different objects of attachment. These can vary from a particular person to the whole

of humanity, in a concrete or abstract way, by self or other identification, in a stable, contested or transient way (Yuval-Davis, 2011, p. 162). Belonging is usually multi-layered and to use geographical jargon-multi scale (Antonish, 2010, p. 644) or multi-territorial (Hannerz, 2002, p. 575).

According to Yuval-Davis; to clarify our understanding of the notion of social and political belonging, it would be useful to differentiate between three major analytical facets in which belonging is constructed (Yuval-Davis, 2011, p. 162-163). The first facet concerns social locations; the second relates to people's identifications and emotional attachments to various collectivities and groupings; the third relates to ethical and political value systems with which people judge their own and other's belonging. These different facets are interrelated, but cannot be reduced to each other.

1. SOCIAL LOCATIONS

When it is said that people belong to a particular sex, race, class or nation, that they belong to a particular age group, kinship group or a certain profession, we are talking about people's social and economic locations, which at each historical moment would tend to carry with them particular weights or grids of power relations operating in their society (Yuval-Davis, 2011). Being a woman or a man, black or white, working class or middle class, a member of a European or an African nation, has a different social meaning in each case. People are not just different categories of social location, with different contextual meanings, they also tend to have certain positionalities along axes of power that are higher or lower than other such categories. Such positionalities, however , would tend to be different in different historical contexts and are also often fluid and contested. Sometimes, however, as Sandra Harding (1991, p. 382-91) and Nancy Fraser (1998, p. 309-36) have commented, certain differences would not necessarily have differential power positionings but are only the markers for different locations. According to this study, some of the young Turkish speaking interviewees emphasized that they did not feel like they belonged anywhere; their home is where they currently live and will change if they move again.

3. IDENTIFICATIONS AND EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENTS

Identities are narratives, stories that people tell themselves and others about who they are and who they are not (Martin, 1995, p. 5-16; Kaptani & Yuval-Davis, 2008, p. 8-10). Not all of these stories are about belonging to particular groupings and collectivities-they can be, for instance, about individual attributes, body images, vocational aspirations or sexual powers. However, even these stories will often relate directly or indirectly, to self and/or others' perceptions of what being a member of such grouping or collectivity (ethnic, racial, national, cultural, religious) might mean (Yuval-

Davis, 2008). Identity narratives can be individual or they can be collective, with the latter often acting as a resource for the former. Although they can be reproduced from generation to generation, it is always in a selective way; they can shift and change, be contested and multiple. These identity narratives can relate to the past, to a myth of origin; they can be aimed to explain the present and probably; above all, they function as a projection of future trajectory. Margaret Wetherell (2006, p. 38-55) argues that identity narratives provide people with a sense of 'personal order'. Some of the Turkish-speaking interviewees emphasized that they can relate to and identify with many great British thinkers and writers, and believe that these intellectuals have shaped their identity, interests and personality. They also have very good command of the language. As they described when they walk around, they enjoy hearing the musicians' on the underground, seeing the artists along the river, and exploring theatres and musicals all around the country. So it's not just about the tea or stiff upper lip people mention. According to my research the Turkish-speaking young generation seemed to have developed hybrid identities and although the discussions show that they, too, privilege their Turkishness as well by saying ''We have great tea in Turkey too.

4. ETHICAL AND POLITICAL VALUES

According to Yuval-Davis, belonging, is not just about social locations and constructions of individual and collective identities and attachments, it is also concerned with the ways these are assessed and valued by the self and others, and this can be done in many different ways by people with similar social locations who might identify themselves as belonging to the same community or grouping. These can vary not only in how important these locations and collectivities seem to be in one's life and that of others, but also in whether they consider this to be a good or a bad thing (Yuval-Davis, 2008). Closely related to this are specific attitudes and ideologies concerning where and how identity and categorical boundaries are being/should be drawn, in more or less permeable ways, as different ideological perspectives and discourses construct them as more or less inclusive. Some of the young interviewees of Turkish origin have stated that they feel stronger when they know that they belong to a large community, like Turkish Community in London. However other young Turkish people have claimed that they prefer being left out of that Turkish community so that they are not labelled accordingly. A few of the Turkish-speaking interviewees described their cultural belonging in terms of beliefs, religion, language, literature, music, arts, food etc. And they emphasized that if these are the things they are assessing culture in terms of, then yes, they would say that they belong to English culture. They also described their reasons for feeling that they belong to this culture because it is open-minded, progressive and liberal. Their rights as an ethnic minority have been protected; and they have had

equal opportunity and have never felt the need or pressure to confirm to a particular way of thinking. Some of the Turkish-speaking interviewees claimed that they belong to Turkish culture and they expressed it that they don't think it's something to do with them, because they are very different culturally. That's why they never feel themselves a part of this country. And they described that with a British passport, they can have a right to live in this country, that's all. One of the young Turkish-speaking girl described her belonging to the community as she would say she feels she belongs to both Turkey and England. But when there is war, when there is a football match, and if England is playing against France or something she would have support England but if England is playing against Turkey she would support Turkey and she describes the reason of that emotion as it is her race.

5. NATIONALISM AND BELONGING

What is a nation and how one does belong to it?

Who is a member of the nation and how does one become a member?

According to Yuval-Davis; the answer to these questions depends on particular political projects of belonging and how they define the pathways to membership of particular nations. Enoch Powell, as a minister in the Conservative government in Britain from 1960 to 1963, argued that 'the West Indian does not by being born in England, become an Englishman' (Gilroy, 1987, p. 46). For Norman Tebbit, a minister in a later Conservative British government, the test was not the ethnic/racial origin but loyalty to the English cricket team, he deemed those who applauded the other team as not belonging to the English nation(constructed as being equivalent to British in this discourse), even if they were born in Britain and had British citizenship and a British education. The essential characteristics of membership in the British nation as defined by David Blunkett (2002, p. 20-67), a British Home Secretary, were knowledge of the English language as well as a belief in the values of the Human Rights Act.

Exclusionary national boundaries, therefore, even within the same nation, can be constructed and imagined in different ways and according to different organizing and categorical principles (i.e. biological origin for Powell, emotional attachment and identification for Tebbit, shared culture and value for Blunkett).

What does it mean, then for national boundaries to be imagined? According to Benedict Anderson (1991, p. 58-74), nations are imagined communities 'because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.' Poole (1999, p. 1-14), comments that the real difference between what constitutes imagined communities and a nation is that as 'society' is whether or not imagining

themselves as a community informs the way people live and relate to each other.

Understanding nations as 'imagined communities' can also explain why people who are differentially located within and outside the collectivity would view the boundaries of the nation in different ways- as more or less exclusionary, as more or less permeable (Yuval-Davis, 2008). For example e.g. many Jews imagined themselves as members of the German nation while German Nazis saw them as not belonging. The question of whether or not 'there is Black in the Union Jack' (Gilroy, 1987, p. 35-46) has been the subject of major political contestation in Britain and the recent rise of the British National Party in the UK as well as similar political parties in many other western countries presents similar contestations in regard to the inclusion of Muslims.

6. YOUNG TURKISH-SPEAKING PEOPLE IN THE UK AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF EUROPE

According to the 2001 Census, 45 per cent of Britain's minority ethnic people live in London, where they comprise 29 per cent of all residents (www.statistics.gov.uk). In this sense, Britain's capital could be referred as a multicultural city at the centre of a new nexus of global movements. London's Turkish speakers are concentrated particularly in the boroughs of Hackney and Haringey, which exist in the North London. This community is itself fragmented, comprising of three main groups; Cypriot Turks, mainland Turks and Kurdish refugees. The presence of Turkish Cypriots is an important feature of the British story because they have not settled in such numbers in any other European country. Turkish Cypriots formed the first of the UK Turkish speaking communities and unlike other Turkish-speaking migrants, they had a colonial connection with Britain. They first migrated to Britain in significant numbers between 1945 and 1955 due to these colonial links, conflict and high levels of employment here in the post-war years. Migration slowed following the UK Immigration Act of 1962 and subsequent Turkish Cypriot immigrants arrived either through family reunification or as refugees following the 1974 war in Cyprus. Turkish migration from mainland Turkey to the UK did not start until the late 1960s and was largely a consequence of limited employment opportunities in Turkey. In contrast to migration to other European countries, migration from both Turkey and Cyprus to Britain was neither organised nor regulated by the government. As a result, migration routes were not chosen by Turkish government policy, as was the case with migration to other European countries. Instead, they were largely determined by individual initiatives and chain migration by using social networks. Ethnic Kurds began to enter in larger numbers during the late 1980s and early 1990s, often with refugee and asylum seeker status, and at a time when the economic circumstances in the

UK were far less favourable. Anecdotal evidence from the community suggests that this increase was due to Britain's recognition of the plight of the Kurds, which led to many people claiming asylum in Britain from Turkey because of the perception that the political conditions were more favourable for their claims (Engin, 2011).

However there is a degree of inter-marriage between these groups and also with majority ethnic groups. The Turkish, Turkish-Kurds and Turkish-Cypriot communities are working and living in the same areas of London (Mehmet Ali, 2001, p. 19-23). A young Kurdish taxi driver described his feelings as; in his opinion, North London was not a part of Britain; he felt himself 'in Britain' only when he left North London and visited other places. In North London, he believed that Turkish people have everything they might expect to find in Turkey, apart from some family members (Kucukcan & Gungor, 2006, p. 243-258). In fact, the Turkish-speaking community is probably one of the most self-sufficient communities in London with half dozen local community-based newspapers, together with Turkish television channels and countless digital radio channels. Community members can provide any service within community ranging from mortgages to a quit-smoking help line, driving instructions to massage parlours. It could be christened 'Little Turkey' (Enneli & Modood, 2005, p. 142-159).

However, there are the negative effects of the families' economic conditions on the young people's employment experiences and the employment patterns change due to various needs of the families. The Turkish-speaking families do not have many opportunities in offer to the next generation, so the working condition in ethnic enclave gives no promising signs for an easy transition and for a possible upward mobility. Turkish-speaking young people experience that strong ethnic inclusion in the current labour market is pushing them to make choice; whether to accept the jobs which their parents already do or attempt to improve their future life-chances. The transition to adulthood would be no doubt an uneasy one for these young people. And it would be not so wrong to say that the ethnic economy might not serve the majority of these young people for an upward mobility, though with these coming from relatively advantaged backgrounds could use the ethnic enclave to jump up to broader labour market (Kucukcan & Gungor, 2006, p. 243-258).

In England where multicultural agendas are strong and the concept of Europe is marginalised in political and educational discourses, it seems unlikely that middle-class Turkish youth have the same emotional access to Europe. There is little reason why the country should reconceptualise her national identity in European terms and the processes of European integration have not seriously affected policymakers. The Europeanisation of British national identity is undercut by Britain's special relationship with the

United States; the geographical detachment from continental Europe; and England's post-war role in the Commonwealth (Geddes, 1999, p. 23-32). Europe did not appear amongst the cross-curricular themes of the 1988 National Curriculum. The Department of Education and Science responded to the 1988 Resolution of the Council of Ministers of Education on the European dimension in education, stating that the government's policies were aimed at 'promoting a sense of European identity; encouraging interest in and improving competence in other European languages; and helping students to acquire a view of Europe as a multicultural, multilingual community which includes the UK (The Department of Education and Science, 1991). However, advice and curriculum guidance on precisely what content and form the European dimension should assume has not matched official British concerns with multicultural issues.

In 1988, multicultural education (unlike European education) became one of the dimensions of the English National Curriculum and the integrationist approach attempted to recognise albeit to a limited extent, cultural and ethnic differences within the concept of Britishness (Geddes, 1999, p. 111-124).

The notion of being European did not sit comfortably with some of the Turkish interviewees, the concept of Europe as a political identity did not easily fit with those Turkish national identities. However some of them felt themselves familiar with the impact the EU has on their life, and recent economic instability within the Eurozone is a timely reminder of how connected they are with the continent. They told that they travel to Europe quite often for business and holiday purposes and have a great deal of friends with continental roots as well.

7. THE RELIGIOUS QUESTION: THE SACRED, THE CULTURAL AND THE POLITICAL

Both Durkheim (1968, p. 249-69) and Weber (1905, p. 221-45) saw religion as being central to social life. Weber expanded in his 'Protestant Ethics' thesis, the argument that particular forms of religious ideologies and practices had originally facilitated and energized the rise of modern capitalism.

It is important to note that two contradictory elements co-exist in the operation of cultures. On the one hand, there is a tendency towards stabilization and continuity, and on the other hand, perpetual resistance and change. Both of these tendencies grow out of the close relationship between power relations and cultural practice (Bourdieu and Nice, p. 331-52 1977; Asad, 1986, p. 117-31; Bottomley, 1992, p. 42). As Friedman (1994, p. 89) points out cultures are not just an arbitrary collection of values, artefacts and modes of behaviour. They acquire, to a greater or lesser extent, 'stabilizing

properties' which are inherent in the practices of their social reproduction. Cultural homogeneity in this view would be a result of hegemonization and it would always be limited and more noticeable in the centre rather than in the social margins, being affected by the social positioning of its carriers (Yuval-Davis, 2011, p. 113-134).

Cultural models become resonant with subjective as well as collective experience. They become the intersectional ways in which individuals experience themselves, their collectivities and the world, and thus often occupy central spaces in identity narratives. In all of these ways the religious domain bears a close relationship to that culture, although the two cannot be reduced to each other. Religion relates to the sphere of the sacred, of the ultimate meaning (Tillich,1957, p. 19-24; Beyer, 1994, p. 95; Armstrong, 2007, p. 143-53). Moreover, religious discourses supply the individual, within specific social and historic contexts, with explicit or implicit answers to the three basic existential questions people have to grapple with- what is the meaning/purpose of one's life?; what happens to us when we die?; and what is good and evil? The relations between the world of everyday life and the sacred religious domain are usually indirect, although in most religions there will be specific times and places which will be dedicated to the realm of the sacred. Spatially, places such as churches, mosques, synagogues and temples are designated places of worship, while specific holy-dates like the Muslim month of Ramadan, the weekly Jewish Sabbath or Christian church services, or praying at several times of day in different religions play a part. So these times and places are sharply differentiated from the secular by specific performative religious acts , such as praying or fasting or lighting special candles. As Karen Armstrong (2009, p. 143-53) argues; religions are more about performativity- i.e. regular repetitive practices that gain their internal as well as social authority with repetition (Butler, 1990, p. 1-23) – than about implicit beliefs, although this differs even formally between religions. For example, Christianity is generally much more about specific beliefs than Judaism. Saba Mahmoud (2005, p. 26-44) also argues strongly that the conceptual relationship between the body, self and moral agency differs in the ways in which these are constituted within different ethical-moral (cultural and religious) traditions. Armstrong also points out that people differ in their talents and ability to immerse themselves in religious spirituality, as is the case with people's differential artistic and poetic capabilities.

However, once these transcendent super-ordinated and integrated structures of meaning are socially 'objectivated', to use Luckman's terminology (1967, p. 35-78), i.e. a personal spirituality becomes a religious institution, a paradoxical situation often develops. Because of their ultimate meaning, religious practices and beliefs can become some of the most

intractable and inflexible symbolic border guards for belonging to specific collectivity boundaries and cultural traditions.

An estimated 23 million Muslims live in Europe (Vertovec &Peach, 1997, p. 3-47) and the presence of Muslims in Europe is not a new phenomenon. The growth of western-educated young generations and the rise of global/transnational Islamic movements are important sources of motivation for Muslims in Europe to express their identity in western public spheres (Kucukcan, 2009, p. 79-103). For example, in recent years, Muslims in Europe become more concerned with the religious education of their children. Turkish Muslims are part of the larger Muslim community in the UK and religion is one of the significant markers of Turkish collective sense of belonging. Therefore the first generation of the Turkish community established Islamic Institutions as soon as they acquired sufficient resources. These institutions were meant to facilitate the transmission of religious values to young Turkish-speaking people. However, attitudes of young people towards religion are variable; research clearly shows that young Turks know very little about Islam. A symbolical religiosity, (practising but not feeling the meaning), is developing among the Turkish youth in the UK who seems to be increasingly feeling the tension generated by the continuity of traditional values and changes in social and cultural environments (Kucukcan, 2009, p. 79-103).

Some of them feel at ease as an Atheist in this country and are free to express their beliefs without fear of taboo or estrangement and they only feel this infringed upon within the Turkish-speaking community. Some of them complain about their fathers who try to make them to go to the Mosque when it is Eid.

Some of the interviewees describe their religion as Islam, but they do not feel comfortable in their celebrating festivities because of they are not widely recognised in the host country. They say that, the ambiance of the religious festivities do not have the same feelings as it does in Turkey.

Some of the interviewees responded the question by saying that even though they are completely allowed to express their religious beliefs, they suggest it that it still did not give the same taste as it were compared to exercising their religion in Turkey.

8. CONCLUSION

It must be pointed out that, crucially, people cannot be simply defined, in most situations, as either belonging or not belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2011). Emotions, from feeling comfortable, safe or entitled to various rights and resources are endemic to belonging, but different people who belong to the same collectivity would feel different degrees and kinds of attachment, the same people would feel different in different times, locations and situations

and some people would feel that they belong to a particular collectivity while others would construct them as being outside those collectivity boundaries and vice versa (Yuval-Davis, 2011, p. 113-134).

This study deals with the kind of identity and sense of belonging expressed by the young people. The focus was on what was said about British, religious and ethnic identities as forms of self-identification. It was clear from research on ethnic minorities that many groups have a strong, albeit varying, sense of one or more minority identity; and that, increasingly, this does not prevent them from also having a sense of other identities, such as being. The young people were asked in the survey to pick one or more identities from several options, which included Turk, Kurd, Turkish Kurd, British Turk, British Kurd, Cypriot, Turkish Cypriot, Middle Eastern, Muslim, Christian, British, Atheist and, finally, Alevi.

According to the research the Turkish-speaking young generation seemed to have developed hybrid identities and had few cross-ethnic friendships and formed an ethnic solidarity group on the basis of common religion, language, culture and physical appearance. The identity formation is deeply affected by their ethnic experiences.

This research suggests that in my sample the Turkish-speaking young people in London, there is no singular identity position but employed hybrid ethno-national, ethno-local and national-European identities as a result of their national location and especially, schooling and social class positioning rather than their families' migration histories. The evaluation shows that the young generations in the UK live a minority culture at home and British culture in the schools, and as a result they have a third hybrid culture.

There was a strong relationship between being born in this country and choosing British as an identity. The research shows that 80 per cent of the young people who were not born in this country did not think of themselves as British. Rather, during the interviews, it became clear that there was a narrow and a wide meaning of 'British' being used. For some, 'British' meant the possession of a passport.

On the other hand, not having British as a self-identity does not mean that the young people chose only Turkish as an identity. Indeed, nearly 70 per cent of the young people chose multiple identities for themselves. In fact, only 20 per cent of the males and 10 per cent of the females chose only Turkish as a self-description. Religious identity does not seem to be central. Less than 5 per cent chose religion as their only identity. 72 per cent did not subscribe to a religious identity at all.

The failure to choose Muslim as an identity may partly be because, for some of these Turkish-speaking young people, being Turkish or Kurdish or Turkish Cypriot already included a sense of religious belonging. Being

Muslim was indeed seen by some as a cultural identity rather than as a religion. As Zeynep, a Turkish-Kurd who did not pick Muslim as an identity, explained: ''I'm an atheist and the only negative side to my life in England comes from the pressure of my family puts me under to hide my religious beliefs from the Turkish community here. In British culture everyone tends to keep themselves to themselves and there's something of a taboo towards being intolerant or unaccommodating. I feel at ease as an Atheist in this country and am free to express my beliefs without fear of taboo or estrangement. I only feel this infringed upon within the Turkish-speaking community.''

In relation to the young people's attitudes towards religion, the research also discussed Islamophobia, the fear of, and hostility towards, Islam and Muslims. In general, Islamophobia did not seem to be a big problem for the young people. In fact, this term was not a familiar concept for them. Almost all of them needed further explanation of the term. Although they did not think that being Muslim was a reason for being discriminated against personally.

In conclusion, the research found that the young people usually choose multiple ethnic identities, but, in the majority of the cases, the term 'British' was not(yet) part of that plurality. This is complicated by the fact that the majority of Kurds refused to self-identify as Turks. Finally, the young people's relationship with religion is not straightforward. They do not consider themselves as part of a Muslim community, but rather, for some, their religious identity is a natural extension of their ethnic identity.

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