Second-generation migrants: Europe and the United States

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The public debate about the second generation in Europe has taken a dramatic shift in the last five years. The riots in the *banlieues* in France, involving mostly Algerian and Moroccan second-generation youth, pitched the cherished republican model into deep crisis. In the Netherlands, arguments about the failure of the country's multicultural society have cited the relatively high number of Dutch Moroccan students who drop out of school and the high crime rate within the Moroccan second generation. In Germany, similar concerns about the Turkish second generation have triggered a debate about the existence of a separate *Gesellschaft*, composed of almost two million Turks living in a parallel world detached from the wider German society. The debate in the US, in contrast, has been much more dominated by the question of illegal immigrants. Negative associations around the second generation, however, have been mostly around crime and gangs and teenage pregnancy.

Such events on both sides of the Atlantic lead to claims that sections of immigrant communities are not integrated. The general idea behind classical assimilation theory is that distinctions along ethnic, cultural, and social lines become less relevant over time as ethnic groups begin to adopt the social and cultural practices of the majority. This is not to suggest that the process of assimilation is a linear one and without difficulties. The fact that (parts of the) second generation are not becoming similar or are resentful toward the host society is often used as evidence by politicians and opinion leaders to argue that integration has failed or that multiculturalism has failed. In the US a number of scholars have argued that fundamental economic changes in society since the formulation of classical assimilation theory, along with the growing diversity of immigrants in terms of social class and nationality, have made the linear model of integration less likely to fit with the more complex reality of the new second generation (Portes & Rumbaut 2005).

New theoretical perspectives emerged in the 1990s from the United States to reflect this view, beginning with Gans' (1992) concept of "second-generation decline" and Portes and Zhou's (1993) theory of "segmented assimilation." Both ideas expressed a fair degree of pessimism for the future of some US-born immigrant youth, positing that they could face what Portes and Zhou describe as downward assimilation into the urban underclasses with permanent poverty being a distinct possibility. The idea that people "assimilate" into more marginalized sections of society is useful in understanding that second-generation integration may take different forms. Whereas through education and, to a lesser extent, in the workplace there is the potential for "formal acculturation" (Gans 1992) of the second generation, their more informal experiences outside school or work can be more significant, especially if they have been left disillusioned by poor schooling or low-paid and low-status employment, and especially when immigrant parents are unable – owing to poor language skills and limited knowledge of the new culture – to control how their children are integrating – a process which has been described as "dissonant acculturation" (Portes 1997).

On a more optimistic note, the theory of "segmented assimilation" suggests that socioeconomic advancement among the Asian second generation often takes place because they uphold the traditions and values of the immigrant community. Upward mobility through ethnic cohesion, as Portes & Zhou

(1993) observed in the Punjabi Sikh community in northern California, gives the lie to classical assimilation theory. Despite the humble social origins of many Punjabi immigrants, and in the face of overt racial discrimination by local white residents, theirs was mainly a story of economic success. The second generation respected parental and community values and did not adopt, as some parents feared, any form of "oppositional culture" that would have adversely affected their education (Gibson 1989).

The authors of the new assimilation theory argue, in opposition to the segmented assimilation theory, that the dominant stream, however remains, "straight line assimilation" –although perhaps not in all regards in the second but at least in the third generation (Alba & Nee 2003: 271–292). A major study of the second generation in New York confirms this, and even speaks of a "second generation advantage" (Kasinitz et al. 2008). The attitude of parents resisting Americanization for their young children, which segmented assimilation theory has shown to be a possible path for upward mobility among Asian groups, may result in the end in "classical assimilation," once the youngsters reach adulthood and access the middle class. Looking at life courses up and into adult life rather than only a particular part of that trajectory may help to soften the divide in the claims between the new and the segmented assimilation theory.

Research on second-generation groups in Europe has drawn upon both the new and the segmented assimilation theory to help describe the integration and mobility patterns of the European second generation (Crul & Vermeulen 2003a, 2006). Particular focus has been on the two alternative "modes of incorporation": downward assimilation, and upward mobility through ethnic cohesion. In some ways, this reflects the growing disparity between, on the one hand, immigrant youth who are performing well and, on the other, the relatively high numbers dropping out of school and failing to find secure employment. The more recent TIES (The Integration of the European Second Generation) data, however, show that in

Europe it is not simply a case of one ethnic group outperforming another (Crul &Schneider 2009).

Overrepresentation in the lower levels of education and higher drop-out rates appear to be a characteristic of the Turkish and Moroccan second generation in Europe, but at the same time a similar large group is moving into higher education. Both realities seem to exist within ethnic groups. Indeed, earlier criticism of the theory of "segmented assimilation" is that it fails to pay sufficient attention to internal differences within ethnic groups (Crul & Vermeulen 2003b).

Ethnic minority groups in Europe, such as Turks, Moroccans, Algerians, or Pakistanis, disproportionately reside in more deprived areas where schools are more likely to have fewer resources, more disciplinary issues, and higher staff turnover (Crul & Doomnernik 2003; Simon 2003; Kaya & Kentel 2005). This echoes some of the notions in the downward mobility variant in the segmented assimilation theory. The residential areas in European cities are, however, not comparable in scale or in terms of their social problems with US ghettos where the potential for downward assimilation is seen as greatest (Portes & Zhou 1993). This pessimistic outlook for people residing in "ghettos" has been the source of some recent criticism from Waldinger et al. (2007), who argue that that second-generation Mexicans, despite gloomy predictions to the contrary, are now integrating into "working-class" America – another form of second-generation integration. The American concept of downward assimilation is too striking in its pessimism and too definitive in its claim for the European context. Even those children of some ethnic groups, like second-generation Moroccans or Turks, who are considered to do less well than children of other ethnic groups, are still mostly upwardly mobile compared to their parents.

The American theoretical debate about the integration of the second generation seems to have had a persistent blind spot for the importance of the national context in which the second generation is trying to move forward. In the American debate on the second genera-

tion, the emphasis has been on comparing different ethnic groups in the same national context (Portes & Rumbaut 1996; for some of the most important studies, see Portes & Rumbaut 2001; Kasinitz et al. 2002). There have been comparatively few studies in which the integration of American children of immigrants is compared with the integration of children of immigrants in other countries (exceptions are the studies of Faist 1995; Mollenkopf 2000; Alba 2005). North American researchers, as Reitz (2002) argues, have only recently started to pay more attention to the importance of the national context in which immigrants and their children live and work.

The importance of the national context for integration pathways has received more attention in Europe (Eldering & Kloprogge 1989; van Amersfoort & Doomernik 1998; Crul & Vermeulen 2003a; Heckmann et al. 2001). That research in Europe is more cross-national is understandable given the fact that there are many countries close to each other which, although economically linked, are structured very differently as we outline below. It is therefore more obvious to look at the effects of these differences in the European context. The international comparative TIES project compares second-generation Turks in 13 cities in seven European countries. When second-generation Turks from poorly educated parents are compared across cities, some remarkable differences in outcomes are found (Crul & Schneider 2010). Whereas in the French cities almost a third of second-generation Turks move into higher education, this is only one in 10 in the German cities. On the other hand, youth unemployment among the second-generation Turks in France is higher than in Germany. A number of educational institutional arrangements can be labeled as important. The early start in school, the full days of school in primary school, and late selection are important for the school success of second-generation Turks in France. The apprenticeship system in Germany, on the other hand, smooths the way to work, while in France students with only a *lycée* diploma have great difficulty entering the labor market. We cannot thus simply say that comprehensive school systems are more inclusive than stratified systems. Also, in comprehensive systems a category is created at the bottom that has difficulties in accessing a good position in the labor market. For this group an apprenticeship system would be a valuable alternative.

An international European comparison triggers the debate about the US specificity of the American theoretical frameworks (Crul & Holdaway 2009; Crul & Schneider 2010). Are differences in outcomes for the various ethnic groups in the US not partly a reflection of American institutional arrangements in school and labor markets or of the specific characteristics of the main ethnic groups in the US? If a certain ethnic group lives in a poor neighborhood in a large American city with poor-quality public schools (Portes et al. 2009: 1081), their children will have little chance of entering (prestigious) colleges. Extreme differences in the quality of schools are typical features of American institutional arrangements in education (Crul & Holdaway 2009).

A similar argument about the US-centeredness of American assimilation theories can be made for the influence of the national discourses on the formulation of ideals of assimilation, which differ greatly across countries. We should be aware that in the US debate the notion of "assimilation," that is becoming similar to the "mainstream population," is built upon the necessity of a country formed by immigrant groups of many different origins to create common denominators and identifiers. In the Scandinavian countries, by contrast, it is especially the tradition of the strong welfare state and the ideal of overcoming inequalities that formulates the main end goals of integration. In France the republican model, with its radical egalitarian view of citizenship, poses yet again another normative integration goal. A good example of how this works in practice is religion: strong particularistic ethnic and religious institutions are mostly considered an important stepping stone for assimilation in the US. The most contrasting case in Europe is certainly France, where religion is mostly

looked upon with great skepticism (Foner & Alba 2008). This obviously also has implications for how assimilation indicators for the second generation are chosen and how they are judged.

SEE ALSO: Children of migrants; Race, nationality, and migration; Schooling, education, and migration; Second generation migrants: Maghrebis in France; Social protest and migration

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