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The Importance of Peers: Assimilation Patterns among Second-Generation Turkish Immigrants in Western Europe

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Abstract

The two dominant approaches to immigrant assimilation, segmented assimilation and "new" assimilation theories, have been successful at reporting and analyzing between-group differences in assimilation patterns. However, studies of assimilation generally do not address differences at the individual level. Current theories of assimilation cannot answer the simple question that gets to the heart of individual-level differences: how do you account for siblings in the same family assimilating in different ways? The usual suspect variables – parents' educational attainment, income and occupational status, nationality/religion, context of reception and experiences of discrimination for the group in the host country – cannot address this question because these factors are the same within a family. So if those variables ultimately do not explain assimilation at the individual level, what does? We argue that peers will significantly affect variations in cultural and economic assimilation. We examine data from The Integration of the European Second Generation (TIES) survey, looking specifically at second-generation Turks across Western Europe. We find peer effects substantially affect cultural and economic assimilation, effects not predicted by either dominant theory of immigrant assimilation. We suggest that future researchers of second-generation immigrant assimilation take more seriously the effects of past and present peers.

Keywords:

assimilation, integration, second-generation, peers, Turkish Muslims, Western Europe

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In nearly all Western countries today a large contingent of children of immigrants born and/or raised in the West (hereafter referred to as second-generation immigrants), has come of adult age. They have left school with or without diplomas, they are in the labor force or trying to find a job, and many of them have married and had children of their own. Following the increasing number of second-generation immigrants, the literature on immigrant assimilation has in the last two decades reoriented the question of assimilation to look specifically at this group (Gans 1992a; Portes and Zhou 1993).[1]

The most influential studies of the second generation in the assimilation field largely draw upon four major surveys: Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS), Immigrant Second Generation in Metropolitan New York (ISGMNY), Immigration and Intergenerational Mobility in Metropolitan Los Angeles (IIMMLA), and The Integration of the European Second Generation (TIES). The overall analytical strategies – and strengths – of the work of those involved in these major surveys (e.g., Crul and Schneider 2010; Kasinitz et al. 2008; Portes, Fernández-Kelly, and Haller 2009; Rumbaut 2008) and other influential scholars in this field (e.g., Alba and Nee 2003) have been looking at differences *between* immigrant groups, and between immigrants and native-born, non-immigrants. For the most part, however, studies of assimilation do not report *within-group* differences: why individuals regardless of group affiliation show different patterns of assimilation. Indeed, Kasinitz et al. (2008:22-3) recognize that within-group variation is often as great as between-group variation in terms of assimilation patterns, but still report their data in terms of between-group differences.

The goal of these scholars is to explain why and how immigrants assimilate. But there is a problem with using data reported in terms of between-group differences to explain these patterns for individual immigrants. This difficulty becomes particularly apparent if we shift the focus to the family. Current theories of assimilation cannot answer this simple question that gets to the heart of individual-level differences: how do you account for siblings in the same family assimilating in different ways?[2] The variables most often used to explain differences in assimilation patterns – parents' educational attainment, income and occupational status, nationality/religion, legal and social contexts of reception and experiences of discrimination for the group in the host country – cannot address such a question because these factors are the same within a family. So if these variables ultimately do not explain variation at the individual level, what does?

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[1] Scholars in the US earlier in the century were also very concerned with second-generation European immigrants (e.g., Warner and Srole 1945), as was Gans in his earlier work (1962). But it is the latest post-Milton Gordon (1964), post-1965 (in the US) wave of assimilation theories that are of concern here.

[2] Given our data, we cannot address this question directly either. But if we had data on siblings our theoretical approach would allow us to address this question. As far as we can tell, there are no surveys or qualitative studies that address variation at this level.

We hypothesize that peers will have a significant effect on variations in assimilation. We go outside the immigration literature, and follow the leads of Harris (2009) and Milner (1994, 2004) to argue that a person's past and present peers affect who they are and what they do – as peers are the people with whom we spend most of our time from a young age. To phrase it in terms of assimilation, if a person "hangs out" with those of the majority, s/he is more likely to be like them and assimilate (i.e., conform) to their ways.

In this article we will examine the strength of peer influence on cultural and economic assimilation patterns of second-generation immigrants. We make use of The Integration of the European Second Generation (TIES) survey, looking specifically at adult, second-generation Turkish immigrants (aged 18-35), thus, controlling for ethnic/nationality background. Our analysis covers eleven cities in six European countries. Below we further discuss the TIES survey and variables we will use in our analysis. First though, let us discuss in more detail the theoretical landscape of immigrant assimilation and our hypotheses regarding peer effects.

Assimilation Theories

Classical conceptions of assimilation assumed that immigrants will eventually and necessarily culturally and/or economically assimilate over time (e.g., Gans 1992b; Gordon 1964; Sandberg 1973; Warner and Srole 1945). However, the notion that assimilation is inevitable has been critiqued since at least the 1960s (e.g., Shibutani and Kwan 1965). In the early 1990s, concurrent with a serious economic downturn in the US, Gans (1992a) proposed that many second-generation immigrants were at risk of downward mobility. Soon after, Portes and Zhou (1993; see also Portes and Rumbaut 1996, 2005; Zhou 1997) developed segmented assimilation theory, which highlights the shortcomings of older notions of assimilation by showing why not all immigrants are upwardly mobile. The consistent theme over nearly twenty years of segmented assimilation theory is that it is the acculturating patterns and interactions *between parents and child*, parents' economic and educational achievements, social capital of the family and ethnic group, immigration status, and the context of legal and social reception for particular groups that principally steer the direction of assimilation for the second-generation offspring.

Within the assimilation field, segmented assimilation theory has been predominant for almost two decades, but it too has come under attack (Brubaker 2001; DeWind and Kasinitz 1997; Morawska 1994). Alba and Nee's (2003) formulation of "new" assimilation theory is the most influential of these. They dispense with the proscriptive and ethnocentric aspects of classical assimilation theory that assumed a move on the part of immigrants toward Anglo-conformity, i.e., becoming "white" and middle class. They argue that assimilation is an important and real phenomenon, but that the mainstream changes just as immigrants do, as social boundaries between whites and nonwhites, natives and foreigners shift, get blurred, and get crossed. Alba and Nee feel that segmented assimilation places too much emphasis on the underclass and downward mobility, ignoring the fact that working-class blacks and Latinos work, have families, and aspire to greater things. Alba and Nee write that segmented assimilation "may predict an excessively pessimistic future for central-city minority youths" (2003:8).

This pessimism in segmented assimilation theory has provided fertile ground for empirical critique. For instance, Kasinitz et al. (2008) make the case that in New York the second generation is generally doing as well or better than their parents, contradicting a central tenet of segmented assimilation theory that those from groups experiencing racism are more likely to be downwardly mobile. Crul and Schneider (2009) make a similar point using TIES data for Turkish and Moroccan second-generation immigrants. They show that upward educational mobility is the dominant trend among these groups who segmented assimilation theory would most likely predict should be downwardly mobile because of their status as largely working-class minorities who suffer great degrees of societal discrimination. Waters et al. (2010) directly test tenets of segmented assimilation using the ISGMNY data and find that dissonant acculturation – where parents and children acculturate at different rates, and which is theorized to lead directly to downward mobility – is actually not as common as segmented assimilation theory implies.

The importance of peers

Our criticism of segmented assimilation theory, and also new assimilation theory centers on what we feel is a major omission in this literature – the influence of peers.[3] As yet, there are a relatively small number of studies emphasizing the role of peers in assimilation outcomes. For example, Cavanaugh (2007) looked at drinking behavior among young Mexican immigrants in the US. Concerning specifically the second generation, she found that the more white friends they had, the more likely they were to binge drink. King and Harris (2007) found that young immigrants who had friendships with native whites were more assimilated in terms of dating and sexual behavior than those who were friends with first-generation immigrants.

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[3] How people choose their peers is an interesting and important question (see Wimmer and Lewis 2010 for a fascinating explanation). Partly it is elective affinity – individuals choose to associate with those who share a common lifestyle (for example, they are religious or not religious like us, they like to party, they like to study, they are of the same ethnic or racial background as us). Partly it is defined from outside, where they are forced or lumped in with others of similar achieved status "like" them, such as "nerds" or "freaks," and those of similar ascribed status, such as those of the same race, ethnicity or religion. There is certainly an interaction effect here between individual personality and inclination on the one hand and peer support and other external factors on the other hand. Personality traits (religiosity, "nerdiness," etc.) and ascribed characteristics may influence an individual's choice of peers, or lead peers to choose them, or have certain peers forced upon them, and/or have other possible peers denied to them. But once linked to peer or status groups, the rules of conformity to norms and associations will apply. For example, people are not religious just because they are concerned with how others think of them. Many, if not most, are concerned about violating religious injunctions because of their religious beliefs, irrespective of

Two other studies that show the importance of peers have come from the TIES survey. Huschek, Liefbroer, and de Valk (2010) looked at timing of first union formation among second-generation Turkish immigrants in Europe. Their results show that the more non-coethnic friends a respondent had, the greater the delay in marriage age. Along similar lines, Huschek, de Valk, and Liefbroer (forthcoming) found that for second-generation Turkish immigrants, contact with non-coethnic peers increases the likelihood of marrying a second-generation Turk or native partner, as opposed to a first-generation Turk.

Similar findings of peer effects among second-generation immigrants have been reported in the field of education. A classic example comes from Matute-Bianchi (1986) who discussed how some Mexican schoolchildren derided their coethnics who sought to achieve academically as "acting white," a phenomenon widely reported among black students in the US (e.g., Fordham and Ogbu 1986; Fryer 2006). Recently, the essays in Gibson, Gandara, and Koyama (2004) expand upon the negative influences of peers on second-generation Mexican students in the US, but also point out, importantly, that peers can be a positive influence on school achievement as well.

While these studies to our minds are quite persuasive, their arguments regarding peer effects have not been taken up in the assimilation literature, which has largely been dominated by sociologists specializing in immigration. Most of the people cited above are from other fields such as anthropologists and economists studying education, or sociologists specializing in health or demography, and the authors of the TIES-based papers are European. Perhaps more importantly, all the authors cited above seem to be operating from outside the theoretical and networked spheres of segmented and new assimilation theories and theorists, as are we. Interestingly though, none of the above studies has foregrounded the theoretical significance of peers to the assimilation process, or has argued how the significant effect of peers is an inherent critique of current theories of assimilation. We turn now to making this critique.

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others' opinions. But the concern often intensifies because of peer group norms and intimate relations within the peer group (e.g., Ali 2005; Schmidt 2004).

Linking peers and assimilation

Peers are an important explanatory variable in many fields of study in the social sciences, including deviant behavior (e.g., Monahan, Steinberg, and Cauffman 2009), teenage dating (e.g., Kreager 2008), and educational attainment (e.g., Steinberg 1996). Oddly though, peers do not have a central place in major empirical undertakings in the assimilation field. For instance, the ISGMNY and IIMMLA surveys did not ask *any* peer-related questions. Peers have no real place in new assimilation theory, and peers have at best a secondary place in the theoretical manifestos of the leading segmented assimilation theorists (e.g., Portes and Fernández-Kelly 2008; Portes, Fernández-Kelly and Haller 2005; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Portes and Zhou 1993; Stepick and Stepick 2010). For example, Portes and Rumbaut (2001:239) in one of their earlier writings asserted that those with coethnic peers do better academically than those who did not have coethnic peers, though usually in theoretical arguments peers are discussed as negative influences, mainly in terms of drugs and gangs (e.g., Portes and Fernández-Kelly 2008; Portes, Fernández-Kelly and Haller 2005). But, in Portes's latest formulation of segmented assimilation theory (Portes, Fernández-Kelly and Haller 2009), peers are not given a place of importance.

While peers generally are peripheral at best to segmented assimilation theory, they do figure empirically in some scholars' work, though without the scholar commenting to any significant degree on their theoretical importance (e.g., Waters 1994; Zhou and Bankston 1998). To take one such recent example, Zhou et al. (2008) described the plight of Rodolfo, a second-generation Mexican man who joined a gang and got into trouble with the police, was nearly deported for being an illegal immigrant, and at twenty leads a very hard life, working long hours for low wages. Zhou et al. (2008) report that Rodolfo said "that if he could turn back time, he would have stayed in school and away from gangs – *a path adopted by his older sister, who is now in college and aspires to become an immigration lawyer*" (p. 48; emphasis added). Their analysis of Rodolfo's woes: "From the very start, he had numerous odds stacked against him – low parental human and economic capital and unauthorized migration status" (p. 49). But these stacked odds were at work against his sister as well, and yet she seems to be succeeding. (It is interesting that his sister, whose life seems to be taking a dramatic divergence from Rodolfo's, does not even merit an entire sentence.) Rodolfo and his sister we may expect share parents, ethnicity and migration status – that is, the critical variables that segmented assimilation, and new assimilation theory as well, see as being central are essentially held constant. So what differs between them? Gender and peers, the latter of which Rodolfo himself emphasizes as important when he says he should have stayed away from gangs. But Zhou and colleagues gloss over how this vignette demonstrates how assimilation patterns can vary so dramatically within one family.

To better understand the importance of peers in explaining variations in patterns of immigrant assimilation, we go outside mainstream assimilation theories. We build upon Harris's (2009) group socialization theory and Milner's (1994, 2004) theory of status relations. Harris boldly, and counterintuitively, argues that we can better account for the development and outcomes of children across time and space by looking at their peers, rather than their parents.[4] For example, when discussing the children of immigrants, she shows how the acquisition of language and accents is a result of what language peers speak, with whom they speak, and how they speak the language (2009:240, 269-70, 366-7). This should be an obvious point, as Western-born children of immigrants, whose parents may not speak the language of their host country (or speak it poorly), generally are fluent in that language, and speak with the same accents as their friends. Thus, if a person grew up with friends who are natives or speak the native language without a "foreign" accent, that person will also speak that language without a foreign accent. Though if s/he grew up with friends in New York who speak with, say, a Spanish accent, s/he too will speak with a Spanish accent even if s/he was born in New York (Harris 2009:178-9).

Milner, drawing on Weber (1968), conceptualizes peer groups as a type of status group. Status for Milner is gained through conforming to group norms and making intimate associations (especially around eating, dating and marrying) with those of greater, or at least equal, status. One of Milner's (1994, 2004) central points is that where status, or social approval, is an important resource that people compete for, conforming to group norms and making the right kinds of intimate associations will be critical to maintaining or improving one's status. He strikingly describes how crucial status is to the lives of American teenagers, who can confer, or take away, status from each other. They, not parents and not teachers, have the ability to define their cultural worlds, and control each other's social standing within. This desperate striving for status among teenagers and their peers has been profitably exploited in dozens of Hollywood films on teens trying to be popular such as *Can't Buy Me Love* (1987), *Jawbreaker* (1999) and *Mean Girls* (2004).

Taking into account the insights of Harris and Milner, we rethink cultural assimilation as another way of saying that second-generation immigrants learn to conform to the norms of their various high school, university, post-school peer/status groups, and learn to make the right kind of intimate associations (Ali 2008). That is, we hypothesize that past as well as present peers will affect the degree of cultural assimilation. We further hypothesize that past and present peers will affect the degree of economic assimilation, as past peers are likely to influence school performance, and present peers may affect employment choices and therefore income possibilities.

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[4] For Harris, you do not actually have to interact with those of your reference peer group (e.g., same aged, grade-school girls) to be influenced by them. If you identify with them, you will see how they act and want to be like them, even if they reject you (2009:159).

Data

The data come from "The Integration of the European Second Generation" (TIES) project, a collaborative and comparative research project on the lives of second-generation individuals of Turkish, Moroccan and former Yugoslavian descent in fifteen cities in eight European countries: the Netherlands (Amsterdam and Rotterdam), Belgium (Brussels and Antwerp), Spain (Barcelona and Madrid), Sweden (Stockholm), France (Paris and Strasburg), Germany (Berlin and Frankfurt), Switzerland (Zurich and Basle), and Austria (Vienna and Linz).[5] The countries and cities were selected on the extent of ethno-racial segregation and on the basis of contrasting immigration, naturalization and integration policies so that respondents would reflect a wide spectrum in policy contexts.

By means of cross-sectional surveys, about 10,000 respondents aged 18-35 years, including 3,750 persons belonging to a native comparison group, were sampled and interviewed between 2007 and 2008 (two second-generation groups and one native comparison group per city with approximately 250 persons per group; in France and Sweden only second-generation Turks were interviewed, and in Spain only second-generation Moroccans). An identical questionnaire was used in all cities, which made it possible to pool the data sets. In all participating countries, the same sample inclusion criteria were used: respondents were selected if they were born in the survey country and if at least one of their parents was born in Turkey, Morocco and former Yugoslavia, respectively. The survey, however, did not have a uniform sampling design. While in the Netherlands and Sweden population registers were used, the method of surname-recognition using phone books was the only feasible sampling frame available for France, Germany, Switzerland, and Austria.[6]

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[5] The TIES project is coordinated by Maurice Crul and Jens Schneider, both of whom are affiliated with the Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies (IMES) of the University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands. The survey was carried out by survey bureaus under supervision of the nine national TIES partner institutes: IMES and the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI) in the Netherlands; the Institute for Social and Political Opinion Research (ISPO) of the University of Leuven in Belgium; the National Institute for Demographic Studies (INED) in France; the Swiss Forum for Migration and Population Studies (SFM) of the University of Neuchâtel in Switzerland; the Centre for Research in International Migration and Ethnic Relations (CEIFO) of the University of Stockholm in Sweden; the Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies (IMIS) of the University of Osnabrück in Germany; the Institute for the Study of Migration (IEM) of the Pontifical Comillas University of Madrid in Spain; and the Institute for European Integration Research (EIF) of the Austrian Academy of Sciences in Austria. For further information on the TIES project and country documentation, see www.tiesproject.eu.

Our focus here is on one second-generation group: Turks, one of the largest immigrant groups in Europe. Hence, our sample was limited to 11 of the 15 cities, as data for Spain do not include second-generation Turks and there is restricted access to the data of Belgium, giving us N=2,661 cases. The pooled multinational sample is ultimately reduced to N=1,715 due to the exclusion of the full-time students (N=396) and missing values on relevant variables. An advantage of examining this immigrant group is that Turkey, unlike Morocco, has never been colonized nor shares a language with any of the participating countries. It has to be said, however, that there are of course significant variations in social and ethnic backgrounds within the population of Turkish immigrants. In addition, patterns of Turkish migration were not similar between European countries: there are concentrations of Turks from different regions of Turkey across Europe. For instance, a significant number of the Turks in Sweden originate from rural areas in Central Anatolia (Kulu), while many in Germany are from more urbanized, western parts of Turkey (Bayram et al. 2009). These differences in regional origins do not only reflect variations in degree of urbanization and, partly related to that, level of education, but also in ethnic composition, culture and religion. For example, Alevism, a heterodox Muslim sect, is peculiar to Anatolia (Kaya and Kentel 2007).

Measurements

Dependent variables

Economic assimilation is a factor score derived from a Principal Component Analysis of the following indicators[7]:

(1) education, measuring the respondents' highest level of educational attainment where national qualifications were transformed into harmonized educational codes (ranging from 1=primary school graduation to 4=completion of tertiary school) to make educational attainment comparable across countries;

(2) current or last occupational prestige, coded according to the International Socio-Economic Index (ISEI; Ganzeboom and Treiman 1996) of occupational status with

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[6] In France, population registers do not include information on parents' country of birth while in the German-speaking countries strict data-protection laws prevented access to population register data.

[7] There was no statistical support for the extraction of more than one factor. The eigenvalue for the first factor was 1.55, for the second factor 0.84. Moreover, the Principal Component Analysis showed that Factor 1 accounted for 52 percent of the total variance.

the mean ISEI score by country of residence and gender for those who never had worked;

(3) perceived difficulties with current income, running from 0=comfortable to 4=great difficulties.

The higher the factor score, the more the second-generation Turkish respondent is economically assimilated.

Cultural assimilation is a factor score constructed using the following variables[8]:

(1) self-measured proficiency in the Turkish language, ranging from 0=excellent to 5=bad;

(2) watching Turkish TV stations (0=only Turkish–language stations, 1=mostly Turkish–language stations, 2=as much survey country as Turkish–language stations, and 3=only survey country's language stations);

(3) feelings of belonging to survey country, ranging from very weak/not at all (0) to very strong (4);

(4) whether the respondent intended to return to parents' country of origin, ranging from certainly (0) to certainly not (4);

(5) religiosity, a constructed variable based on four items of religious behavior (fasting, eating halal food, daily prayer, and visiting the mosque) and self-identifying as Muslim, with five categories: "strict Muslim" (fasting, eating halal food, daily prayer and visiting the mosque "most of the time" or "always"); "social Muslim" (only fasting and eating halal food "most of the time" or "always"; one or both of the other two items on religious behavior less often); 2="symbolic Muslim" (one or more of the four items on religious behavior less often); "identificational Muslim" ("never" on the four items on religious behavior but they identified themselves as Muslim); and "no Muslim at all" ("never" on the four items on religious behavior and not identifying themselves as Muslim).

The higher the respondent's factor score, the higher his/her level of cultural assimilation.

Independent variables

Most scholars in the field posit that family effects, in particular those of parents, are critical in determining the degree of assimilation. Four variables refer to the level of parental human capital: (1) *parent's educational level*, i.e., highest level of father's and mother's education:

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[8] The eigenvalue for the first factor was 2.03, for the second factor 0.90, and the first factor accounted for 41 percent of the total variance.

1=incomplete education/primary school; 2=secondary; 3=above secondary (reference group), and 4=missing[9]; (2) *mother's* and (3) *father's proficiency in the language of survey country*, running from 1=not at all to 6=very well; and (4) *mother having paid work when the respondent was 15 years of age* (0=no, 1=yes). The *parents' supportive role for school matters* index was based on the response of four items asking the respondent how often, during secondary school, parents (a) controlled the time they spent on homework; (b) helped with homework; (c) talked with them about school or studies; and (d) met with or talked with their teachers. The answer categories ranged from 0=never to 4=often, with the index ranging from 0-16.

In addition, three variables refer to characteristics of respondent's older siblings: (1) their *highest education level*: 0=no diploma/primary school/lower secondary (reference group), 1=upper secondary, 2=tertiary; (2) whether (=1) or not (=0) *one or more older siblings left secondary school without diploma or certificate*; and (3) *older siblings' supportive role for school matters*, an index based on the questions how often (0=never to 4=often) their older siblings (a) helped with homework and (b) talked with them about school or studies (scores ranged from 0-8).

Our main purpose in this article is to test the hypothesis that peers predominantly affect assimilation outcomes. That is, who you "hang out" with affects who you become. Hence, we include variables for past peers. Two variables indicate the extent of contact with natives during secondary school: (1) *proportion of natives in secondary school*, measuring the ethnic composition of the secondary school attended by the respondent: 1=almost no native students, 2=up to 25 percent, 3=approximately 50 percent, 4=up to 75 percent, and 5=almost all native students; and (2) *number of Turks among the three best friends during scondary school* (range 0-3). In addition, a variable is included indicating the *importance of peers during secondary school* in supporting with studies or schoolwork, with answer categories varying from 1=not important at all to 5=very important. Moreover, a dummy variable is created whether (=1) or not (=0) the respondent had *close friends who left secondary school without a diploma or certificate.*

With regard to the current family situation, first, a dummy variable is created taking the value 1 if respondents *were living with their parents* and 0 if living on their own. Secondly, the variable *contact frequency with relatives* is constructed based on respondents' answer to the question how often they met those relatives that they most frequently have contact with, ranging from 0=never/rarely/no relatives in the country of residence or another European country to 4=daily.

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[9] A separate category for missing cases was created as the parental education measure had more missing data than other variables.

Two variables measure the composition of respondent's present peers: (1) *number of Turks among the three current best friends* (range 0-3); and (2) the *highest educational level of the three best friends*: 0=no diploma/primary school/lower secondary (=reference group), 1=upper secondary, and 2=tertiary.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics (N=1,715)

	Range	Mean	SD
Assimilation			
Economic	-4.3 - 4.8	-0.00	1.55
Cultural	-6.1 - 4.5	-0.00	2.03
Control variables			
Age	18 - 35	25.1	4.80
Man	0/1	0.49	0.50
Muslim: Shia or Alevi	0/1	0.09	0.29
First-generation partner	0/1	0.21	0.40
Second-generation partner	0/1	0.13	0.33
Children	0/1	0.28	0.45
Resident of country with multicultural integration policy	0/1	0.26	0.44
Family factors in past			
Highest level of education parents	1 - 3	1.61	0.65
Level of education parents missing	0/1	0.22	0.41
Fluency host language mother	1 - 6	3.11	1.30
Fluency host language father	1 - 6	2.64	1.04
Mother had paid job when respondent was 15	0/1	0.42	0.49
Supportive role of parents for school matters	0 - 16	6.93	3.69
Highest educational level older siblings	0 - 2	0.65	0.73
One or more older siblings left school without diploma	0/1	0.15	0.35
Supportive role of older siblings for school matters	0 - 8	2.42	2.55
Peer factors in past			
Proportion natives in secondary school	1 - 5	3.27	1.05
Number of Turks among 3 best friends during secondary school	0 - 3	1.44	1.10
Peers important during secondary school	1 - 5	2.74	1.21
Friends left school without diploma	0/1	0.47	0.50
Family factors present			
Living with parents	0/1	0.44	0.50
Contact frequency with relatives	0 - 4	2.09	1.22
Peer factors present			
Number of Turks among 3 best friends	0 - 3	1.60	1.10
Highest educational level best friends	0 - 2	1.07	0.73

Finally, we included the following control variables in the analyses: (1) respondent's *age* (in years) at the time of completion of the questionnaire; (2) gender (represented by the dummy variable *man*); (3) religion (represented by *Shia/Alevi*, comparing with Sunni sect of Islam); (4) *partner status*, distinguishing the following categories: first-generation partner, i.e., a partner who was born in Turkey; second-generation partner, i.e., a partner who was born outside Turkey to Turkish parents; and native partner, a partner of another ethnicity, or no partner (reference group); (5) *children*, referring to having children (=1) or not (=0). Previous research repeatedly has shown that children have an opposite effect on, among other things, the working life of men and women, in that fathers are more likely to be employed, while mothers are less likely to be employed (e.g., Frejka et al. 2008). Thus we also included the interaction term *children*male* in the analyses; and (6) *resident of country with multicultural policies*, distinguishing the participating countries[10] with a more multicultural approach (Sweden and the Netherlands) from those with a more exclusionist or assimilationist approach (Austria, Switzerland, Germany, and France).
Table 1 provides descriptive information on all variables.

Results

In order to test the extent to which past and present peers, besides family factors, affect assimilation outcomes, we carried out stepwise multivariate regression analyses on economic and cultural assimilation. Tables 2 and 3, respectively, present the results of these analyses. In Model 1, the control variables are included. Models 2 and 3 incorporate the set of *past* family and peer variables, respectively. In the next two steps of the analysis the variables capturing the *present* family and peer situation, respectively, were also taken into account (Models 4 and 5). The coefficients are standardized and hence allow comparison of the impact of each variable on the two assimilation outcomes.

Basic model

When only the control variables are considered (Model 1), economic assimilation was not affected by respondents' sect of Islam, though being Shia or Alevi did have a small, negative effect upon cultural assimilation for second-generation Turkish immigrants. Men were less economically integrated than their female counterparts, while gender had no effect on cultural

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[10] For purposes of simplicity we speak about countries, although our data only represents on average two cities per country.

Table 2. Determinants of the degree of economic assimilation among Turkish second-generation immigrants in selected TIES-cities (N=1,715; standardized regression coefficients)

Model:	1	2	3	4	5
Control variables					
Age	0.28***	0.33***	0.27***	0.29***	0.25***
Man	-0.09**	-0.07**	-0.06*	-0.06*	-0.05*
Muslim: Shia or Alevi	-0.00	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
Partner status (ref. no partner or partner of other ethnicity):					
First-generation partner	-0.09**	-0.06*	-0.05	-0.04	-0.03
Second-generation partner	-0.05*	-0.01	0.02	0.03	0.04
Children	-0.23***	-0.19***	-0.15***	-0.15***	-0.13***
Children*man	0.06	0.06*	0.06	0.06	0.05
Resident of country with multicultural integration policy	0.15***	0.09***	0.14***	0.14***	0.09***
Family factors in past					
Highest level of education parents (ref. above secondary):					
Incomplete education/Primary		-0.24***	-0.19***	-0.19***	-0.17***
Secondary		-0.15***	-0.12**	-0.12**	-0.11**
Missing		-0.03	-0.02	-0.02	-0.02
Fluency host language parents:					
Degree of fluency mother		-0.02	0.01	0.00	0.01
Degree of fluency father		0.05*	0.03	0.03	0.03
Mother had paid job when respondent was 15		0.08***	0.05*	0.05*	0.04*
Supportive role of parents for school matters		0.14***	0.11***	0.11***	0.09***
Highest educational level older siblings (ref. no diploma/primary school/lower secondary):					
Upper secondary		-0.02	-0.01	-0.01	-0.02
Tertiary		0.14***	0.13***	0.13***	0.10***
One or more older siblings left school without diploma		-0.02	-0.02	-0.02	-0.01
Supportive role of older siblings for school matters		-0.01	-0.01	-0.02	-0.00
Peer factors in past					
Proportion natives in secondary school			0.08***	0.08***	0.06**
Number of Turks among 3 best friends during secondary school			-0.24***	-0.24***	-0.20***
Peers important during secondary school			0.01	0.00	0.01
Friends left school without diploma			-0.04	-0.04	-0.03
Family factors present					
Living with parents				0.04	0.05
Contact frequency with relatives				-0.01	0.00
Peer factors present					
Number of Turks among 3 best friends					-0.03
Highest educational level best friends (ref. no diploma/primary school/lower secondary):					
Upper secondary					0.14***
Tertiary					0.25***
Adjusted R^2	9.3	20.6	26.8	26.8	29.7

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

Table 3. Determinants of the degree of cultural assimilation among Turkish second-generation immigrants in selected TIES-cities (N=1,715; standardized regression coefficients)

Model:	1	2	3	4	5
Control variables					
Age	0.19***	0.22***	0.15***	0.06*	0.03
Man	-0.05	-0.03	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01
Muslim: Shia or Alevi	-0.05*	-0.05*	-0.04*	-0.05*	-0.05 **
Partner status (ref. no partner or partner of other ethnicity):					
First-generation partner	-0.23***	-0.19***	-0.18***	-0.23***	-0.20 ***
Second-generation partner	-0.08**	-0.05*	-0.02	-0.07**	-0.05
Children	-0.03	0.01	0.05	0.04	0.06
Children*man	-0.03	-0.02	-0.03	-0.03	-0.04
Resident of country with multicultural integration policy	0.03	0.02	0.07**	0.07**	0.04
Family factors in past					
Highest level of education parents (ref. above secondary):					
Incomplete education/Primary		-0.10*	-0.05	-0.04	-0.00
Secondary		-0.04	-0.00	0.00	0.03
Missing		0.01	0.03	0.04	0.06
Fluency host language parents:					
Degree of fluency mother		0.25***	0.23***	0.20***	0.18***
Degree of fluency father		-0.03	-0.00	-0.01	-0.00
Mother had paid job when respondent was 15		0.01	-0.02	-0.00	-0.01
Supportive role of parents for school matters		0.03	-0.01	0.01	-0.03
Highest educational level older siblings (ref. no diploma/primary school/lower secondary):					
Upper secondary		0.08**	0.09**	0.08**	0.07*
Tertiary		0.07*	0.06*	0.05	0.03
One or more older siblings left school without diploma		-0.04	-0.04	-0.04	-0.03
Supportive role of older siblings for school matters		-0.02	-0.02	-0.01	-0.01
Peer factors in past					
Proportion natives in secondary school			0.13***	0.13***	0.11***
Number of Turks among 3 best friends during secondary school			-0.21***	-0.21***	-0.05
Peers important during secondary school			-0.00	-0.01	-0.00
Friends left school without diploma			-0.07**	-0.06**	-0.04*
Family factors present					
Living with parents				-0.21***	-0.20***
Contact frequency with relatives				-0.10***	-0.08***
Peer factors present					
Number of Turks among 3 best friends					-0.24***
Highest educational level best friends (ref. no diploma/primary school/lower secondary):					
Upper secondary					0.22***
Tertiary					0.17***
Adjusted R^2	5.6	15.5	22.0	25.2	30.6

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

assimilation. The older the respondent was the higher the level of economic and cultural assimilation. Having a partner of Turkish origin, especially if this person was born in Turkey, was also related to lower economic and cultural assimilation. While having children had no significant effect on the degree of cultural assimilation, second-generation Turkish parents were less assimilated in economic terms than their childless counterparts though no significant interaction effect was found between gender and having children.

One intriguing finding was that respondents who lived in countries with multicultural policies were more economically assimilated than in countries with assimilationist policies. Further, the integration policies of these countries had no bearing on cultural assimilation. The implication is very interesting – second-generation immigrants will (or will not) culturally assimilate irrespective of direct government initiatives on assimilation or multiculturalism – and multiculturalist policies seem to have a positive impact on economic assimilation. Both these results run counter to much prevailing wisdom on this topic (e.g., Caldwell 2009).

Overall, the control variables explained 9.3 and 5.6 percent of the variance in economic and cultural assimilation, respectively.

Past family

Parental human capital determined the degree of economic and cultural assimilation to a considerable extent given the increase in explained variance in Model 2 compared with Model 1 of 11 (economic) and 10 (cultural) percent. Turkish second-generation immigrants whose father and/or mother had completed secondary schooling or had less education were less assimilated in these respects than their counterparts with higher-educated parents. Furthermore, economic assimilation was higher for those having a mother who had a paid job when they were 15 years of age and, to some extent, when their father spoke more fluently the language of the survey country, while their degree of cultural assimilation was positively related with mother's proficiency in the language of the survey country. Besides parental human capital, parents' supportive role in school matters did significantly increase their economic assimilation, though not cultural assimilation. With regard to the impact of siblings in younger years, only the level of education of the older siblings seems to matter: Turkish second-generation immigrants whose older siblings had upper secondary (cultural) and/or tertiary education (economic), were characterized by higher levels of economic and cultural assimilation. Whether or not one or more of their older siblings left school without a diploma or supported them with regard to school matters was not found to have any significant link with their assimilation outcomes.

Past peers

In line with our hypothesis, the composition of *past* peers substantially affected the degree of assimilation among Turkish second-generation immigrants, as is shown by the significant increase in the explained part of the variance in Model 3 (26.8 percent in case of economic assimilation and 22.0 percent in case of cultural assimilation) compared with Model 2 (20.6 and 15.5 percent, respectively). Turkish second-generation immigrants who went to school with a higher proportion of natives during their secondary school years and those who had more natives among their three best friends were significantly more assimilated in both economic and cultural terms. Respondents whose friends from secondary school did not leave school without diplomas were more culturally assimilated, but this had no effect on economic assimilation. No difference in economic and cultural assimilation was found between those who felt and those who did not feel that peers were important during secondary school in supporting studies or schoolwork. Once we accounted for the peer situation in the past, the previously observed difference in cultural assimilation between the Turkish second generation whose parents completed at most primary education and those with higher than secondary education becomes insignificant as well as the positive effect of father's language proficiency on economic assimilation.

Present family

Living with parents and frequent contact with relatives were negatively associated with cultural assimilation, while neither had any relationship with economic assimilation (Model 4). The modest change in the increased variance (3.2 percent) indicates that the present family situation was a relatively minor factor affecting the cultural assimilation of respondents. Due to the inclusion of the present family variables, the previously observed high level of cultural assimilation among Turkish second-generation immigrants whose older siblings completed tertiary education becomes insignificant.

Present peers

Model 5 shows that the educational attainment of the respondent's best friends had a significant positive effect upon economic and cultural assimilation. Having friends from the same ethnic group had a strong negative effect upon cultural assimilation, but no effect upon economic assimilation. After data on these variables have been included, the explained part of the variance of economic assimilation increases significantly from 26.8 to 29.7 percent and for cultural assimilation increases from 25.2 to 30.6 percent. Although the previously observed effects of past peer variables decrease after the inclusion of current peers, nearly all remain significant even after controlling for the current peers situation. Interestingly though, the number of best friends from the same ethnic group during secondary school went from having a strong negative effect to being statistically not significant for cultural assimilation. This perhaps indicates that the effect of one's past peers upon cultural assimilation is not permanent, and is specific to the peer group. If this is the case, this actually supports our contention that peers affect assimilation as a result of intra-group dynamics. Another possible explanation is that there is a high correlation between the composition of past and present peers, i.e., those having many Turks as best friends during secondary school also had many Turks as best friends at the time they were interviewed. In any case, both of the above explanations are speculative given that the data are cross-sectional.

Table 4. R-square values and their percentage of the total explained variance for each group of independent variables

	Economic assimilation		Cultural assimilation	
	Adjusted R^2	% of the total explained variance (29.7%; see Table 2)	Adjusted R^2	% of the total explained variance (30.6%; see Table 3)
Control variables	9.3	31.4	5.6	18.3
Family factors in past	12.1	40.8	11.0	36.0
Peer factors in past	12.8	42.9	12.4	40.7
Family factors present	0.0	0.0	4.5	14.7
Peer factors present	19.3	64.9	19.9	63.2

Finally, we re-ran the analysis with the groups of independent variables separately. Table 4 clearly supports our argument that peers matter (all past and present peer R-squares are statistically significant and substantial), and more so than family (R-squares are higher for peers than for family). This table suggests that the effect of present peers in Tables 2 and 3 is partially masked by its order in the stepwise regression analysis. When we run the analysis just for present peers, its effect is larger than that of all the other independent variables, indicating a strong interrelationship between present peers and past peers and family situation.

Discussion

We started this article with the hypothesis that peers significantly affect cultural and economic assimilation. In our analysis of the TIES data, we indeed have found a significant and substantial effect of past and present peers upon both cultural and economic assimilation, an effect that is not predicted by the current leading theories of assimilation. We feel especially confident in making the case for the centrality of peers in the assimilation process, as the survey spanned multiple cities in multiple countries with different governmental approaches to immigrant assimilation, and also because we controlled for nationality.

While our results show a strong effect of peers, it is possible that the effect of peers may actually be *underestimated* here, as many of the questions we used to operationalize our independent and dependent variables, especially of cultural assimilation, did not directly translate from our theoretical notions, and some operationalizations of the theory were not available. For instance the survey had no questions regarding the cultural behaviors (e.g., drinking, smoking, dating patterns) of *peers*, which might help to specify and clarify the effects of peers upon assimilation. This is not a criticism of the TIES survey; rather, this is a problem inherent when using someone else's data to test specific hypotheses.

To directly test our hypotheses would require more questions about past and present peers' specific behaviors and accomplishments, such as more details on number and background of friends, more details on education (majors, time to degree, etc.), employment history, religious practice, drinking, dating, drug usage, and more specifics on similar cultural behaviors of respondents themselves. We feel strongly that our results may have been even more substantial for both economic and cultural assimilation had there been such questions for us to examine. Perhaps this is something future researchers could explore.

There are a number of theoretical notions that thoughtful ethnographies and surveys, especially longitudinal ones, could do to study peer effects. Peers as we have shown have a strong influence upon the patterns of assimilation of individuals. Assimilation is not a "one-time-only" affair, but is continually negotiated, and may vary over the individual's lifetime as there are different status groups that the individual is associated with, and different norms to which s/he will conform to or deviate from (though this is not something we were able to examine through the TIES data). Self-identification with and membership in different groups may vary over time and context for the individual, and the importance of peer groups also varies over time, as individuals marry, have children, leave school, enter the labor force, become unemployed, divorced, and so on. Assimilation can also be reversed. For instance, culturally assimilated individuals in the West can "de-acculturate" by turning their backs on Western/Westernized peers and "hanging out" more exclusively with peers who share a disinterest or even disdain for Western culture and people (Ali 2008).

To study assimilation as conceived in this manner would require looking more closely, and more widely, at the behaviors and networks of peers. It is likely that different sized peer effects will show along different phases of the lifecycle, for instance peers may become less important after marriage generally (e.g., Warr 1998), but their effects can still be seen within certain social circles (Vanlandingham et al. 1998). To tease these kinds of issues out would require longitudinal studies, and would also require the kind of in-depth, nuanced questioning better suited for ethnographic research. But given that so few studies have been done regarding immigrants and peer effects, any and all studies would likely be significant contributions.

Segmented assimilation and new assimilation theories have shown quite well why assimilation patterns vary between groups. Their macrotheoretical foci lead us to look at how social boundaries have shifted over time thus changing assimilation patterns (Alba and Nee 2003), how changing patterns of social discrimination and labor market structures help some groups assimilate while making it more difficult for others (Portes et al. 2009), and also show how certain institutional changes such as affirmative action greatly help the assimilation process along for some (Kasinitz et al. 2008). But again, these are macrolevel issues that explain why among the second-generation Chinese do better than Haitians and Indians do better than Dominicans. It is at the level of the individual that both theoretical approaches falter, and it is their reliance upon parents as a main explanatory variable at the microlevel that is a large part of this problem. It is of course true that parents choose neighborhoods and schools, even if by default, and parents are richer or poorer, have more or less education, are more or less supportive with school work, and so on. These are factors that no doubt shape children's opportunities and, as we saw above, have statistically significant effects upon their children's economic and cultural assimilation. But, the question still remains what is the mechanism by which these effects play out? Again, if we were able to look at data within immigrant families and saw that there was variation in economic and cultural assimilation among the children within particular families, then it is very unlikely that parents' social capital could be the cause, as these are essentially the same for all these children. The cause of this variation then would have to lie elsewhere, and we have shown that to a large degree it lies with peers.

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