Young Turkish immigrants in Germany are increasingly more religious than their parents and grandparents and this religious participation, along with a host of other factors such as cultural assimilation friction, racism, and xenophobia, is influencing the creation of a new third identity that is neither German nor Turkish. The situation in Germany is demonstrative of a growing trend in European countries. Using young Turkish immigrants in Germany as a case study, to what extent does the younger generation of ethnic minorities in Europe, between the ages of 16-26, engage in religious activity, especially as contrasted to their parents and grandparents? But also when compared to other youth of similar ages. To what extent does this religious participation play a role in the formation of a new, third identity? What other factors are contributing to this new identity? The literature surrounding identity formation supports the conclusion of a third identity being formed, and furthermore religion/spirituality can be important factors contributing both positively and negatively to identity formation. In this part one of the research, the literature surrounding identity formation will be explored to set the stage for part two which will explore the religious aspect of youth identity formation along with contributing factors.

Xenophobia, defined as fear of other cultures and people from other countries, and costs of cultural assimilation are further contributing to these pressures by encouraging a process of Re-Ethnicisation, which Skrobanek defines as the process by which youth draw closer to their ethnic identities after being pushed away from the dominant, mainstream identity.¹ This process is readily observable in Turkey where youth grow up feeling German but begin to perceive the micro-aggressions from ethnic Germans and then begin to claim a sense of identity through Re-Ethnicisation. This process is part of the larger socially bound process of identity formation.² It is a continual process, especially for adolescents who seek to find a place in society through identity experimentation. The way governments are reacting through citizenship and naturalization laws are also part of the institutional effect on identity. The German governments

responses have resulted in weak Psychological Citizenship and thus the Turkish youth in Germany have a weaker sense of shared identity with Germany.

But what is identity? Czarina Wilpert defines it as “the feelings of belongingness that they articulate themselves.” It is important to remember that the social environment within which the process is unfolding is crucial to the process. The settings can be divided as follows: institutional settings like schools, peer groups such as friends or classmates, the symbols of the dominant youth culture of the time, and the culture of the ‘mainstream’ or what Wilpert calls parental culture. For the Turkish youth in Germany, this process is driving them towards an identity that is neither German nor Turkish. The question then becomes is this identity a hybrid of Turkish and German or a completely new third identity. Why do they not choose one identity? Why is the process pulling them in a third direction? Solda Koydemir makes the case that it is because Hybrid Identity and the associated acculturation process are beneficial, it produces well-being. This is the case for youth throughout Europe, but especially for Turks in Germany; religion is playing an increasingly critical role in the identity formation process. It plays both positive and negative roles: on one end it provides a belief structure that allows a shared sense of identity that is denied to many youth. On the other, this shared identity can be twisted by forces seeking to exploit young people. The truth is religion is becoming increasingly more important to Young Turks in Germany, and it is playing a key role in their Hybrid Identity formation.

The role of religion has become important to the identity formation process for Turkish youth in Germany. In terms of identity, religion provides “affiliation and belonging, behaviors and practices, beliefs and values, religious and spiritual experience”. Within this increased level of religious participation, there are varying levels of commitment. Numerous studies suggest that other identity factors play a large part in the religious identity component. Factors such as age, ethnicity, nationality and environment have an effect on religious participation. For example, Hemming and Madge discuss a situation where a poor religious man insists on his wife not

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5 Koydemir, Solda. “Acculturation and Subjective Well-being: The Case of Turkish Ethnic Youth in Germany.” Journal of Youth Studies 16, no. 4, 460-73.
working to enhance his own masculinity in the scope of his feeling powerless in his lack of resources, while a middle-class religious man likes his wife working to enhance his prestige and wealth. This highlights the way gender identity affects the type and degree of religious identity i.e. traditionalist or liberal. It should come as no surprise that men will often use religion to uphold and enforce “patriarchal positions of power.”

There are, of course, positive aspects to a strong religious identity. Furrow, King and White talk about the strong sense of belonging and commitment that religious identity has on young people. A sense of belonging is essential to identity formation and religion can provide the structure and support that many young people crave; in short youth identity formation requires a sense of meaning and purpose. Damon, Menon, and Bronk discuss the importance of meaning and purpose in youth identity. They define purpose as “…a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at once meaningful to the self and of consequence to the world beyond the self.” Religion can be important in providing purpose to youth, and leading to a positive identity formation. However, these same positive aspects: purpose, meaning, belonging, and values can be turned to extreme and destructive purposes.

Extremism can come from other elements and not just religion. Uncertainty-Identity theory can help explain radical extremism and how youth are pulled into certain identifications. The theory states that uncertainty in life can cause identity to become vulnerable and therefore people will search out a belief structure that provides a clearly defined identity and purpose. This can be a religious belief structure that encourages violent acts of terrorism or a gang that offers you a “family” in exchange for your willingness to commit acts of violence. Youth can be particularly vulnerable to this, as identity formation is in a formative stage and is characterized by uncertainty and a search for stability and meaning.

Turkish youth in Germany are experiencing a myriad of pressures on their identity formation process. They are experiencing a large degree of uncertainty and this has led to

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conflicting pressures which pull them into two different societies. On the one hand the cultural and societal values of their Turkish parents and grandparents remains strong. Norris makes the claim that immigrants carry much of their culture with them and remains strong up to the third generation. On the other they are growing up in Germany and experience cultural assimilation pressures from school, peer groups and the German society. Considering this, it is important to note that identity is not uniform across all Turkish youth. A study conducted by Daniel Faas finds varying levels of Hybrid Identity among Turkish youth of different socio-economic classes. Faas finds that Turkish youth maintain a hybrid identity combining their Turkish political and cultural identities with that of their current countries. Interestingly however, he finds that Turkish youth of a middle-income classification associate more with the political aspect of their Turkish identity, while lower-income youth prize their ethnic cultural differences. Faas finds that Turkish youth, seen as foreign in Turkey and as foreigners by Germans, form a distinct “chain of identities” that includes their Turkish, German, regional and European identities. Faas conducts numerous interviews with Turkish students and he finds that they often don’t feel secure in any one identity but often feel closer to Germany than Turkey. The data clearly shows Turkish youth in Germany form Hybrid identities that, to varying degrees, include their Turkish backgrounds. Koydemir finds that the Turkish immigrants in Germany favored an integration based form of acculturation, while also maintaining a high degree of connection with their Turkish identity. This further supports the Hybrid identity process. Türkendeutsch is an excellent example of the combining of German and Turkish linguistic identity. It is a combination of Turkish and German; the exact structure varies, but it is often German with Turkish grammatical structures and various Turkish words supplanted in the language.

Watzinger-Tharp finds in her study that it is used in quite variable ways. She records a conversation between two girls and one starts in Turkish but ends with a German verb form and

progresses into a Turkish grammatical verb expansion using a German verb. The second girl responds in a more distinct Turkish way to underscore her opposition to the 1st speaker’s statements. The great linguistic variability of Turkish youth in Germany underscores the degree of Hybrid identity present. Taking into account Faas, Pippa, and Koydemir, hybrid identity is forming among Turkish ethnic youth in Germany due to large culture carry-over from 1st generation parents and this dual identity is, according to a positive psychological model of subjective well-being, beneficial to the identity formation process.

The way the German government and mainstream German society respond to Turkish immigrants contributes greatly to the identity formation of the Turkish youth. Newman, Hartman, and Taber discuss the difficulty associated with two cultures coming into contact with one another. They theorize that there are certain costs when an immigrant culture comes into contact with a mainstream culture. One group must incur the cost of assimilating. The question about the politics of immigration is really about who will assume those costs. Before the new citizenship law of 2001, the German government was mainly against granting the children of Turkish immigrants any claim to German citizenship. It should be noted that the original Turkish immigrants were always told their stay would be temporary under the Guest Worker Program. The Germans were never ambiguous about this issue. The effect that this has had on the 2nd and 3rd generation of Turkish immigrants is a push away from truly connecting to a German identity. Even the new law forces youth when they come of age to choose one identity over the other. It does not allow for dual-citizenship.

The research shows that Turkish youth who have grown up in Germany are not perceived as German by ethnic Germans nor are they seen as Turkish in Turkey. The result is a weakening in what Sindic calls Psychological Citizenship, which is linked closely with national identity. He defines Psychological Citizenship as “the subjective sense of being a citizen.” Sindic posits that this sense of citizenship is tied to a shared identity with the community. This shared identity is lacking to some degree among many Turkish youth in Germany and thus Turkish youth are left in a state of uncertainty about their identities and try to pull elements of both cultures,

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Turkish and German, to form their own Hybrid identity. This push comes not only from the
government, but many ethnic Germans who view the Turkish youth as immigrants still and
engage in various acts of discrimination. Skrobanek suggests that this further pushes the Turkish
youth into their Turkish identity, resulting in a re-ethnitzation; where they grow up feeling
German, but as they reach adulthood are pushed back into their ethnic identities.\(^{19}\) However,
since 1998, the German government has engaged in a policy of integration with its immigrant
population. It seems that this has not slowed down the process of Hybrid identity, because many
Turkish immigrants do not wish to completely set aside their Turkish identities, which these new
policies are encouraging.

Young Turkish immigrants in Germany are experiencing pressures from all sides in their
identity formation processes. Literature suggests that these pressures are driving them into one of
two places. One is a Hybrid identity incorporating elements of Turkish and German. This is
supported by elements like Türkendeutsch and studies which examine this feeling of dual-
identity.\(^{20}\) The other, darker side, is a very small minority that is drawn into extreme religious
structures which take advantage of their vulnerable identity formation process, and they are only
vulnerable because of the multitude of pressures denying them stable identities. Why are Turkish
youth more religious? Research suggests religion is providing what society cannot. It gives youth
a defined set of belief structures that encourage a common, stable identity and it bestows purpose
and meaning. The youth are asking where they belong. Germany does not seem particularly
welcoming, and Turkey considers them German, so this leaves an opening for religious belief
systems to say: you belong here, this is your identity. Hybrid identity and increasing religiosity
are two mechanisms that Turkish youth in Germany are using to deal with a society that deals
them a great deal of hardship in their formative years.

In part two of the research project, work will be done on-site in Germany for the period
of one year. The religious aspect of identity formation in Turkish youth will be explored along
with other issues.

\(^{19}\) Skrobanek, Jan. "Perceived Discrimination, Ethnic Identity and the (Re-) Ethnicisation of Youth with a Turkish
Ethnic Background in Germany." \textit{Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies} 35, no. 4, 535-54.

\(^{20}\) Norris, Pippa, and Ronald Inglehart. "Muslim Integration into Western Cultures: Between Origins and