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Cosmopolitanism and the relevance of 'zombie concepts': the case of anomic suicide amongst Alevi Kurd youth[1]

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Abstract

Against Beck's claims that conventional sociological concepts and categories are zombie categories, this paper argues that Durkheim's theoretical framework in which suicide is a symptom of an anomic state of society can help us understand the diversity of trajectories that transnational migrants follow and that shape their suicide rates within a cosmopolitan society. Drawing on ethnographic data collected on eight suicides and three attempted suicide cases of second-generation male Alevi Kurdish migrants living in London, this article explains the impact of segmented assimilation/adaptation trajectories on the incidence of suicide and how their membership of a 'new rainbow underclass', as a manifestation of cosmopolitan society, is itself an anomic social position with a lack of integration and regulation.

Key words: cosmopolitanism, zombie concepts, anomic suicide, transnational migration, Alevi Kurds, rainbow underclass

Introduction

Beck argues that contemporary society is ontologically different from that of the previous era and with this ontological shift has come also the need for an epistemological one (Beck 2000). For him there has been a 'paradigm shift' from a first to a second modernity, accompanied by a shift towards cosmopolitanization (Beck and Sznaider 2010). Modern society, or what he terms 'first modernity', was an era characterized by, amongst other things, banal nationalism, certainty, collective patterns of life, and progress that could be analyzed by applying a logic based on binary oppositions such as 'either/or' or 'us/them' within the boundaries of the nation state (Beck and Lau 2005: 527). From this perspective, Durkheim's theory of society and social phenomena was also developed from a perspective of 'methodological

nationalism', taking the nation state as the units of analysis. In contrast, 'second modernity', as a new, cosmopolitan era, is characterized by globalization, individualization, global risk, transnationalism, banal cosmopolitanism and the erosion of nation state boundaries. In second modernity the logic of binary opposition is replaced by a pluralist approach, so instead of 'either/or' we have the principle of 'both/and' (Beck and Sznaider 2010; Beck and Lau 2005: 526-27). As Beck (2002: 20) comments:

> cosmopolitanism lacks orientation, perhaps because it is so much bigger and includes so many different kinds of people with conflicting customs, assorted hopes and shames, so many sheer technological and scientific possibilities and risks, posing issues people never faced before.

Therefore, conventional sociological concepts and categories, such as Durkheim's are 'zombie' categories that are not capable of capturing the cosmopolitan social reality in this age of second modernity and 'a new perspective of "methodological cosmopolitanism" must be developed for this task' (Beck and Lau 2005: 530).

According to Beck (2000), transnational migration as a 'manifestation of the cosmopolitan society' (Morris 2013) needs a cosmopolitan sociological imagination that transcends national/local boundaries. An analysis of the experiences of transnational migrants, such as belonging, integration, citizenship and cultural identities, cannot be accurately explained by taking the nation state as a container or unit of analysis in the way that conventional theorizing does. The integration of migrants according to classical sociology was based on an either/or dichotomy, predicated on an understanding that migrants came either to belong, and to be integrated/assimilated into the country of settlement, or not. Their transnational experiences beyond the national boundaries were seen as 'sociologically insignificant' (Beck 2006). However, the experiences of today's migrants are characterized by transnational engagements and belonging simultaneously to both their community of origin and their community of settlement. Furthermore, instead of seeing belonging as linear and one-dimensional, the migrants face a diverse set of adaptation options that involve conflicting cultures, trajectories, and lifestyles that can exist side by side. Beck uses the concept banal cosmopolitanism[2] to argue that the processes and experiences that occur within contemporary cosmopolitan space have become part of everyday life

and are irreversible and force themselves upon both the migrants and natives whether they like it or not (Beck 2002). As a consequence, according to Beck (2002: 31), 'community life will no longer be determined solely or even primarily by location; and collective memory is losing its unity and integrity'. Thus cosmopolitan social theory uses a methodological cosmopolitanism that redefines the conception of society not within a nationalistic framework but within a universalistic one (Morris 2013; Fine 2007; Beck 2002).

However, Beck's claim that conventional sociology is irrelevant has been challenged by Inglis (2014) and Turner (2006) who argue that sociological concepts and categories, as developed by classical sociologists such as Durkheim, can still help us understand 'the social' within a cosmopolitan society. In examining the case of suicide amongst young second-generation Alevi Kurd (AK) males, this article accepts that while their transnational migration status, the nature of British society (London in particular), and the nature of the 'new rainbow underclass' (Portes and Rumbaut 2001) as the social segment in which they are located, can be seen as 'cosmopolitan manifestations' (Morris 2013), it also argues that classical theoretical concepts and categories, what Beck calls 'zombie concepts', are far from dead and are still useful in helping us to understand suicide as a social phenomenon within a cosmopolitan transnational context.

It is worth noting here that the concepts of cosmopolitanism and transnationalism have provoked much debate as to whether they refer to the same processes or not and as to which comes first and which contributes or provides conditions for the other (*cf.* Faist et al 2013; Van Den Anker 2010; Delanty 2006). My interpretation is that, for Beck, transnational and cosmopolitanism are two distinct but interrelated concepts with the former being an aspect of cosmopolitan society but not its defining feature. Transnationalism in this sense contributes towards cosmopolitanism, the latter being a much broader concept although it is often used interchangeably by Beck to explain the cosmopolitan experience of transnational migrants, one which goes beyond national borders (Beck 2002). However, this cosmopolitanism encompasses more than just their transnational relationships to include not least the banal cosmopolitanism of their everyday life within their community of settlement.

Cosmopolitanism and Durkheim's zombie sociology

Turner (2006: 134) claims that classical sociological theory is not just concerned with national societies but is a 'quest to understand and define "the social" as it is the science of social institutions – family, citizenship, religion, the law and so on' (Turner 2006: 136). It is also the study of the values, cultural patterns and dynamics that underpin these institutions and how they can unite or exclude people. Furthermore, sociology is a critical discipline and far from being the 'science of (national) society', has been interested in the debates and processes regarding globalization and global issues beyond national boundaries (Turner 2006: 135). Indeed, in relation to Durkheim, Fine (2013) argues that his analysis of 'the social' contains a cosmopolitan vision, while for Turner (2006: 9) 'the idea of the social is directly relevant to the task of analyzing the transnational relationships and global process'. Inglis (2014) also argues that Durkheim envisages within nation-state societies a development of 'civil duties' towards 'general obligations of humanity', a move towards cosmopolitanism or a world moral culture; and thus, 'empirical cosmopolitanism is not antithetical to (classical) sociology, but is in fact an important part of it' (Inglis 2014: 109). Far from being static and 'zombie', classical sociological concepts and categories are still relevant and can promote cosmopolitanism and contribute to research on a transnational global scale (Inglis 2014). Before specifically looking at AK male suicide it is useful to briefly review Durkheim's theory of suicide and the 'zombie concepts' essential for its analysis.

Durkheim (1996) is the first sociologist to research suicide on the basis that suicide rates vary with the degree of social integration and regulation of a society. For Durkheim even this seemingly individual act is essentially provoked by the social organization of the community to which the individual belongs, and as such suicide rates are an index of the social health or illness of a society. Durkheim argues that society constrains individuals in two ways: firstly through integration by instilling a commitment to the values and social norms of the group to which they belong; and secondly by defining specific goals and the means to attain them and thus controlling what would otherwise be unlimited human desires and aspirations. The integration and regulation of an individual is shaped by various institutions or 'societies', such as family, religion, political and economic societies, which in an 'ideal society' are in a harmonious relationship with each other (Bearman 1991). If not they would fail to fulfill their regulative and integrative roles, and this would lead to a state of anomie that produces pathologies such as high suicide rates (Durkheim 1996; Bearman 1991). In

other words, under adverse social conditions, where the individuals' social environment fails to provide them with the necessary sources of integration and regulation, the moral health of these individuals is compromised. Durkheim develops four main social types of suicide: egoistic, altruistic, anomic and fatalistic. Egoistic and altruistic suicide occur when there is either under or over-integration while anomic and fatalistic suicide occur when there is either under or over-regulation of individuals by the society in which they live.

However, whilst appreciating Durkheim's theoretical distinction between integration and regulation and between anomic and egoistic suicide, in practice it is difficult to make a clear distinction between the two. Pope (1976), one of the proponents of this position, argues that 'given Durkheim's basic theoretical perspective, to be integrated into a group is to be subjected to the moral authority of its rules. Structural integration and normative regulation simply represent different conceptualizations of the same social reality' (Pope 1976: 34). Indeed, Durkheim himself wrote that egoism and anomie 'have a peculiar affinity for one another... We know that they are usually merely two different aspects of one social state; thus it is not surprising that they be found in the same individual' (Durkheim 1996: 288). Thus for the purpose of my research the use of one of these terms is taken to encompass the use of its pair and there is no attempt to make a distinction between them in the analysis of the data. In fact, a close examination of the ethnographic data from my research confirms that, while there are specific individual differences in the cases of suicide, typically the suicides share both anomic and egoistic characteristics.

Durkheim is certainly not without his critics. Halbwachs (1978) argues that the variation in suicide rates between Catholic and Protestant communities is not, as Durkheim argues, due to their religious organization but to geographical factors. Suicide is higher amongst Protestant communities because Protestants predominantly live in urban areas and life in urban settings, compared to rural ones, is highly disorganized. Nevertheless, whilst disagreeing on the interpretation of the statistical data this study still supports Durkheim's fundamental argument that suicide is a social phenomenon and social isolation or integration has an effect on suicide rates. However, it is Douglas (1967) who most famously criticizes Durkheim and offers an alternative perspective in studying suicide. Douglas argues that Durkheim's theory is invalid because the official statistics, which were the basis of his theory, are problematic.

However, I argue that Durkheim's structural and Douglas' interpretive approaches can be seen as complementary rather than in irreconcilable conflict. My research combines them to conduct an ethnographic study into suicide that locates the personal biographies and life experiences of those who committed suicide within a Durkheimian analysis of the underlying social organization of the transnational community of the AKs in London (a full account of the methodology can be found in Cetin, 2015). More recently, Durkheim's notion of social integration and regulation as determinants of suicide rates is supported to a significant extent by research that has been conducted amongst minority and migrant communities (see Rubinstein 2002; Burr *et al.* 1999; Leavey 1999; Travis 1990; Hassan 1983-1995; Hezel 1976).

From Beck's perspective of methodological cosmopolitanism, Durkheim's concepts and categories used in his study of suicide are zombie concepts because they were formulated during first modernity and from a perspective of 'methodological nationalism'. Durkheim took the nation-state as the container of social processes and the national society as the key order for studying major social, economic and political processes (Beck and Sznaider 2010: 382). More specifically, the societies that Durkheim studied were culturally highly homogeneous with clear national boundaries and banal nationalism, lacking cosmopolitan features such as transnational migration, globalization, and banal cosmopolitanism. Therefore, for Beck, Durkheim's concept of integration, regulation and anomie were formulated within the nation state framework and based on the logic of binary opposition (whether they were integrated or not integrated; regulated or not regulated; anomic or not anomic). However, I argue that these concepts (anomie, regulation and integration) do not lose their usefulness in understanding suicide within a cosmopolitan transnational context.

Alevi-Kurds and male youth suicide

Since 2003 the Alevi Kurdish community in London has experienced the reported suicide of fifty of its young men. These suicides created a sense of moral panic within the AK community on a local and transnational level and have been perceived as both an epidemic and an enigma (Gunes 2013; Ahmed 2009). Despite the entrenched prohibition on suicide and its rarity amongst Alevis in Turkey, the incidence of young male suicide is rising amongst the Alevi Kurds living in London, an explanation of which requires an understanding of the structural changes taking place

within the AK community in a cosmopolitan transnational context. More specifically, although suicide is an issue related to second-generation AKs in London, it cannot be understood without locating it within the process of migration that brought changes affecting the social equilibrium of the community in the country of settlement.

Much of the sociological literature on suicide and migration confirms Durkheim's analytical framework that integration, regulation and community cohesion play an important role in understanding suicide amongst ethnic migrants (Baudelot and Establet 2008; Rubinstein 2002; Burr *et al.* 1999; Leavey 1999; Hassan 1995 1983; Hezel 1989). It has been empirically demonstrated by scholars such as Portes (1999) and Morawska (2009, 2004) that the level and direction of integration, regulation, and sense of belonging, that is the community cohesion, is predominantly shaped by a set of structural and agentic factors such as the context of departure from the home country, reception into the host country, continuing transnational engagements and the social background of the migrants – an interplay of national and transnational factors which corresponds to Beck's description of a cosmopolitan condition.

Persecuted exclusion and low suicide rates

With a population estimated at twenty million in Turkey, Alevis[3] are the second largest religious group after Sunni Muslims. While the majority of Alevis are ethnically Turkish, around twenty per cent of them are ethnically Kurdish – Kurds are the second largest ethnic groups in Turkey. Due to their religious and ethnic difference from Turks and other Kurds, Alevi Kurds, who are the subject matter of this research, shared a marginal socio-economic and political position prior to their migration to the UK, a migration that began largely in 1989 (Geaves 2003; Griffiths 2002; Wahlbeck 1999)[4]. Their peculiar history and ambiguous relation with the Turkish Republic make AKs a 'twice minority' (Gold 1992) because of their religious and ethnic marginality. Turkish official ideology defines citizenship on the basis of both religion and ethnicity, where Sunni Islam and ethnic Turk form the dominant identity, excluding all other ethno-religious groups such as AKs (Koçan and Öncü 2004), and for many centuries the authorities have used religion and ethnicity to discriminate against AKs. It is this marginality and history of persecution and exclusion that recurs in AK history, reconstructing and sustaining the social boundaries of their collective identity as a

distinct ethno-religious community separate from those surrounding them such as Sunni Turks and Kurds, as well as Alevi Turks.

This ethno-religious coherence, that both regulated and integrated the AKs, was a product of their historical experience, which I have termed 'persecuted exclusion' (Author, 2014), and as such, closely resembles the case of the Jewish communities in Western Europe studied by Durkheim. The hostility that surrounded the AKs invoked a strong sense of collective identity and internally united them into an ethno-religious/cultural community. The fear of being killed and the pressure to assimilate, also lead the AKs to form a strong political community in order to defend themselves and to resist assimilation, all of which functioned as an integrative mechanism. Ethnographic data from my research[5] shows that the pre-migration state of the AK community is characterized by very low suicide rates, corresponding to the social characteristics of a well-integrated and regulated community (Durkheim 1996, *cf.* also Macdonald 2003; Leavey 1999; Neeleman and Wessely 1999; Hassan 1995, 1983; Hezel 1989).

Due to their fear of persecution the Alevis formed semi-autonomous or self-regulated communities in isolated rural areas with strong religious and cultural institutions that not only integrated and regulated the individuals but also functioned as a means of resisting assimilation. The more they were put under such pressure from the authorities and the mainstream majority, the more they united around their religious-cultural institutions as a source of identity and space for comfort and self-worth. Through periodically held religious ceremonies the collective norms and values of Alevism were reinforced, making everyone feel a part of the society. As Durkheim (1996) argues, religious society acts as a protector and, within the AK community before migration, can be seen as one of the underlying factors in explaining the low rates of suicide.

Most AK families came from rural communities with extended family and kinship networks that held the older and younger generations together, helping the latter to feel more secure and to internalize the collective values of the society. This resulted in a strong sense of community that acted as an important preventive mechanism against suicide (Durkheim 1996; Macdonald 2007; Hassan 1995, 1983; Rubinstein 1992; Hezel 1989). The AK's economic activity was centred on agricultural production where

economic life was stable and based on a limited, mechanical division of labour with little anomie (Durkheim 1996). This simplicity decreased not only the risk of anomie but also the possibility of 'status conflict' within the AK community, thus minimizing what for Gibbs and Martin (1964) is another cause of suicide.

It can be said therefore that the low suicide rates that characterized the AK communities before migration to the UK can be attributed to the balanced social organization of these communities, albeit a social organization that was largely a product of persecution and exclusion. As such it accommodated much of the regulative and integrative institutions that minimized the vulnerability of the AKs to suicide. The risk of suicide was also reduced by the sense of a fairly certain and limited future trajectory through which the individual would share a similar future to others: namely, grow up and remain in the same society, do military service, marry, have children and so on.

In relation to the pre-migratory AK society we can see the relevance of Durkheim's analysis of 'the social' formulated within a local framework to explain the regulative and integrative institutions that reduced the risk of suicide. The society showed very limited, or even no signs of cosmopolitanism as Beck (2006) defines it, and the sense of belonging was highly connected to their local community and community cohesion was largely achieved through collective memories of the past.

Segregated integration: First Generation and Settlement in London

Studies on suicide suggest that compared to their communities of origin, the majority of immigrant communities show higher rates of suicide (Borges *et al.* 2009; Kposowa *et al.* 2008; Aspinal 2002; Leavey 1999; Neeleman and Wessely 1999; Burvill 1998; Hassan 1995, 1983). Although research focuses on individual risk factors such as geographical distance, culture shock, future shock, racism, identity crises, family breakdown, unemployment and so on, they all, like Durkheim, attribute these rates to a decline in the cohesiveness or integration of the community as a consequence of the migratory and settlement process.

However, not all immigrant communities, it would seem, are vulnerable to suicide and the pre-migration trend of low suicide rates within the AK community prevailed even after the AKs settled in London, a migration that had increased significantly since 1989. According to research conducted by Kposowa *et al.* (2008), Hjern and Allebeck (2002), Hassan (1995) and Trovato and Jarvis (1986) certain immigrant communities preserve their pre-migration suicide rates even in the country of settlement. These communities manage to preserve their traditional or pre-migration social structures and establish an ethnic community with a sufficient level of integration of their members. Indeed, the case of the first-generation AKs follows this pattern and, apart from a couple of disputed cases, the low suicide rate persisted in the first generation. Post-migration, the social cohesion was achieved through a segmented assimilation/adaptation (Morawska 2009; Portes and Zhou 2003) that did not destroy the social equilibrium that had characterized its pre-migration state. This type of assimilation/adaptation entails immigrants establishing family and kinship networks in the country of settlement, which they rely on, at the same time creating economic and social resources within the boundaries of their new ethnic community whilst still maintaining strong transnational ties with the community of origin [6]. More specifically, the segmented adaptation trajectory that the first-generation AKs followed was what Morawska (2009:18) defines as an 'ethnic-path adaptation within their own communities'. This enabled them, by resisting acculturation into British society, to preserve a strong sense of ethnic identity with strong community ties both local and transnationally. This, in turn enabled the community to continue to fulfill its integrative and regulative functions, reducing the vulnerability of the AK migrants to suicide by reducing most of the risk factors noted above that are associated with suicide.

The first-generation migrants arrived in the UK in groups and settled predominantly in London boroughs such as Hackney, Islington and Haringey, which meant that they established a local community in which they could retain their strong traditional, ethnic, cultural, family and kinship ties, strengthened by common employment in the local textile industry. This geographical, social and economic concentration was created because the AKs came predominantly from traditional rural communities with no knowledge of life in the UK and the English language, and this made it difficult to transcend their ethnic boundaries and engage with the wider British society. However, it protected them from those factors, such as the cutting of traditional ties, culture shock,

racism, unemployment, and feelings of uprootedness, associated with high rates of suicide amongst other immigrant communities (*cf* Kposowa *et al.* 2008 and Hassan 1995).

The first-generation AKs engaged in menial work, mainly in the textile industry within the ethnic labour market, which gave them a sense of identity and orientation (Piore 1992) as well as being a source of income that was saved to establish their own small, family businesses later on. An additional benefit was that, with the ethnic concentration in the same industry and workplace, the risk of racism and discrimination, and most importantly the risk of unemployment, was reduced. This allowed them in Durkheimian terms to work towards realistic goals, giving them a sense of purpose, and thus reducing anomie. In addition they were strongly located within a defined local community.

But cosmopolitan aspects of their social existence were by no means absent. The first generation AKs also established and maintained strong social, political, and economic transnational engagements (TNEs) with their communities of origin in Turkey. Some of these economic and social engagements involved reuniting families, supporting and helping people to migrate, and sending remittances. Morawska (2009: 34-35) refers to these practices as 'habituated practical considerations', which helped to maintain the traditional norms and values of the community countering any anomie created by their geographical social dislocation. An important TNE established by the new AK community in London was the strong interest in political events in Turkey. Alevi and Kurdish identity issues were not only at the centre of public debate in Turkey but also amongst the AKs in London, and this led to a heavy engagement in identity politics at a transnational level. Especially through the Turkish speaking community centres this provided the AKs with a sense of ethnic, political and cultural identity that attached them to their country of origin, mobilizing the first-generation AKs around a collective cause that functioned as an integrative force increasing community cohesiveness on a transnational scale. Although this was at the expense of assimilation into mainstream British society, it enabled an intra-ethnic integration that helped prevent suicide by enabling the first-generation AKs to maintain a strong collective identity and sense of belonging (*cf.* Leavey 1999; Trovato and Jarvis 1986; Hassan 1983). Nevertheless, the everyday lives of the first generation AKs were also characterized by banal cosmopolitanism. Although it was limited, due to various factors such as language

barriers and close community ties, they had to work with other ethnic minority groups in the textile factories/sweatshops, serve non-AKs as customers in their shops and cafés, consume non-national goods, and live within the same social housing blocks sharing communal spaces such as parks and children centres.

Here we have to see the experience of the first generation AKs both as a local and cosmopolitan manifestation that sets up something of a challenge to Beck's theory of cosmopolitanism (*cf.* Morris 2013), at least in terms of his claimed redundancy of 'zombie concepts'. The AKs lack of acculturation, their segregated integration, and their strong sense of belonging to the community of origin, created a cohesive community in London. And although geographically separated from the AK community in Turkey, their sense of continuity with it was heavily influenced by their collective history and experiences of their past, strengthened by their transnational engagements at both the economic and political level as the first generation migrants had families and relatives still living in their community of origin which whom they maintained transnational contact. The sense of displacement that might have led to anomie was countered by a strong sense of a local community, albeit geographically distant from its place of origin, aided by an emerging transnational identity that placed the community both within British society (in terms of a segregated integration) and at the same time a wider cosmopolitan society. This acted as a protective mechanism against suicide. However, increasingly for the second-generation AKs, this failed to be the case.

Anomic disaffection: the second-generation Alevi Kurds
The cosmopolitanism of the second-generation AKs is much more evident and certainly plays a role in explaining the incidence of suicide amongst young AK males. Without making claims for a causal explanation of the sudden increase in the suicide rate, to understand them we have to see how the social mechanisms and institutions that played an integrative and regulative role for the first-generation AKs failed to function for the second. Data from my interviews show that, apart from one case, the suicides and attempted suicides followed a similar trajectory within a similar social context that can be described as an assimilation into the 'new rainbow underclass' (Portes and Rumbaut 2001), a social position characterized by chronic poverty, criminality, anti-mainstream values and a high degree of anomie (*cf.* Waldinger and Feliciano 2004; Portes and

Rumbaut 2001; Durkheim 1996) and one which we shall see has features of cosmopolitanism.

Before explaining the individual factors that paved the way for the suicides, it is important to give an overview of the cosmopolitan context within which these factors materialized. Many first-generation immigrants settled in areas of London that were previously populated by other ethnic groups with disadvantaged backgrounds, and where there was ethnic tension, violence and limited opportunities for upward social mobility. Portes and Rumbaut (2001: 59) argue that the first generation can take an ethnic path adaptation that has a 'modest starting position' with low but 'realistic' future expectations deriving from a willingness to take unpleasant jobs. However for the next generation, these conditions create a '"rainbow underclass", composed of frustrated children of immigrants, unwilling to accept the same modest jobs as their parents, and unable to move up the occupational ladder' (Portes 1999: 471). This was the social context of settlement for the AKs. The first generation followed the ethnic path adaptation undertaken by other first generations, but their children, who come to socialize within the existing rainbow underclass of previous second-generation immigrants, came to create 'a new rainbow underclass… at the bottom of society' (Portes and Rumbaut 2001: 45). This social position had a high risk of ethnic violence, crime, dropping out of school and the adoption of anti-mainstream norms and values. It was also a social context, containing as it did a diversity of adaptation trajectories, conflicting cultures and lifestyles, that is, according to Beck, a feature of a cosmopolitan society. It was within such an anomic social situation that the suicides of the second-generation AKs took place. It is this disadvantaged social and cultural context that differentiates the cosmopolitan experiences of the first- and second- generation AKs. Obviously the cosmopolitan aspects of the first generation were manifested in their transnationalism and banal cosmopolitanism but they were highly bound to their ethnic community which provided them with guidance, and relatively high certainty and clear goals. However, the cosmopolitan experience of the second generation was much greater than that of their parents. The second generation were the one who were to be challenged by much greater uncertainties, risks, violence and greater individualization as they came to become marginalized from both their own community and the wider society[7].

Marginalization, family role reversal and education

Seven out of the eight suicide cases examined left school without any qualifications despite their parents' high expectations. Educational failure is not an unexpected outcome for the children of immigrants with a disadvantaged socio-economic background and who, concentrated in particular areas, come into contact with native-born and other members of the underclass with an anti-mainstream and anti-school 'downtrodden' ethnic subculture (Portes *et al.* 2005; Porter and Hao 2004). This is consistent with the experience of the second-generation AK youth and their downward assimilation into the new rainbow underclass.

As we have noted, the first-generation AKs originated from rural areas in central Turkey and had very little education. This disadvantaged socio-economic and cultural background, together with the hardships that they faced in the process of settlement and difficulties in learning English, meant that they could not help their children's schooling such as homework, attending parents evenings and monitoring their children's performance at school, all of which significantly contributed to educational underachievement, an important factor in their children's journey into the new rainbow underclass (Machin and McNally 2011; Dustmann *et al.* 2010; Portes *et al.* 2005; Enneli *et al.* 2005). In addition, there occurred a 'role reversal' between parents and children, where the responsibilities normally associated with parents became reassigned to the children, the result of the children's ability to speak English that they had learnt at school. Parents assigned considerable responsibilities to their children in managing various bureaucratic requirements, like filling in forms for the job centre, the benefit office, lawyers, *etc*., while the children could control the flow of information from the school to the parents who had little English. This left children at an early age under weak parental control and with little respect for their parents leading to intergenerational conflict, an important factor as Hezel (1989) has noted in influencing suicide.

An important factor determining both educational outcomes and the possible entry into the new rainbow underclass is the context of reception, that is the characteristics of the neighbourhood and schools (Faas 2008; Hanushek and Rivkin 2006; Portes and Hao 2004). Generally the children of newly-arrived migrants attend school and mix with native-born children from other disadvantaged ethnic minorities. These children may

already have lost faith in the positive impact of education on the ability to be upwardly socially mobile, and have often rejected the 'mobility goal' altogether (Zhou 2001). Those who committed suicide also attended schools in relatively deprived neighbourhoods that were predominantly populated by ethnic minorities and characterized by high ethnic tension with black youths, a native-born ethnic group with an oppositional culture. The attitudes towards education and future goals of those who committed suicide were significantly shaped by the presence of other ethnic minority groups, particularly black youth, whom they used as a reference group against which they defined themselves. This particularly occurred towards the end of their secondary school, and their involvement in violence with black youth was primarily responsible for their exclusion from school. Since education, followed by employment in the mainstream labour market, is a fundamental path to upward social mobility and integration into mainstream society (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Enneli *et al.* 2005), it is not surprising that these young men, who had achieved no educational qualifications had, therefore, given up their chances of such integration.

The young AKs were not only in conflict with their parents but were open to the ethnically diverse influences found in the neighbourhood schools that they attended. In particular, the children came into conflict with other ethnic groups against whom they began to define themselves. With weakening parental influence they largely rejected their AK culture and a residual AK identity came to be articulated, not in terms of belonging to a particular community with a respect and adherence to its traditions and values, but simply as a situational identity defined in opposition to other proximate groups. In effect, their Alevi identity had largely disappeared as none of the participants felt that they had an attachment to, or even knowledge of, AK cultural and religious values and did not participate in cultural or political activities organized by the community centres. This disengagement of the youth from the community pushed them further away from the institutions of the family, ethnic community and the labour market towards involvement with gangs, locating them within the new rainbow underclass (Portes and Rumbaut 2001).

Marginalization and the gang

Involvement with gangs was an important factor in the trajectories of those who committed suicide[8]. Seven of those who committed suicide, as well as the two

attempted cases, had been involved in ethnic gangs to various degrees for a considerable period of time and the formation of gangs and involvement in them were other factors in the assimilation into the new rainbow underclass (Portes *et al.* 2005). Commentators (Gemert *et al.* 2008; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Bankston III 1998) argue that migrants generally settle in deprived neighbourhoods with poor schools where their children are 'exposed disproportionally to peer groups involved with youth gangs and intergroup violence' (Rumbaut and Portes 2001: 6). This was the case with the AK young men with interviewees reporting how the young men who committed suicide had identified the black youth as a 'threat' (*cf.* Alexander, 2000) against whom they formed or joined counter-gangs. Almost all of the second-generation participants stated that it had been necessary to form, or join existing, Kurdish gangs in order to protect themselves from the threat posed by the 'blacks in their schools and neighbourhoods' and mentioned at least one occasion when either they, or a member of their family or friends, had been verbally or physically abused.

The gangs also offered status and protection, but for those who committed suicide the gangs also held the promise of material advancement. One of the reasons children of migrants form and join gangs is because of the rapid decline in job opportunities (Hagedorn and Macon in Bankston III 1998). These young men had failed at school, but nevertheless had also being acculturated into the mainstream values of success, as well as those of the new rainbow underclass. They saw in the gangs an alternative means to achieve the goal of being rich, a goal that could not possibly be achieved through the limited type of legitimate employment available to them. As Merton (1968) argues people turn to illegitimate means to achieve their goals when they cannot access the legitimate means. Further he argues that defining unrealistic goals is an indication of anomie as it suggests a lack of societal influence over individuals. As in the case of those who committed suicide, defining such unrealistic goals was evidence of the influence of peers as well as western consumer culture over that of the community. It also shows the lack of integration into the norms and values of either the ethnic community or the wider mainstream society. But those who had joined the gangs, now even more in conflict with their parents, were left only with the gang as a basis for their group identity, but this in itself was only a loosely secured connection and could easily be dissolved. It is interesting to note that, after a certain period and for various reasons such as mistrust, jealousy and a disbelief in the ability of the gang to give them the

future they wanted, those who committed suicide had distanced themselves from the gangs. They now found themselves in an even more marginalized situation, not only without the regulation of the ethnic community or the wider society but also without the regulation or protection of the gang.

Marginalization and the ethnic labour market

Having ceased their schooling, and becoming involved with gangs, those who committed suicide had abandoned their chance of upward mobility into mainstream society. They were left only with one possible option: the ethnic labour market with employment in casual, low status and poorly paid jobs. However, finding employment within the ethnic enclave is not necessarily bad as it offers the possibility for the children of migrants to experience upward social mobility by establishing their own businesses. But for two interconnected reasons this trajectory was made difficult, if not impossible, for those who were to commit suicide. Firstly, they had already resisted doing the jobs of their parents which they saw as monotonous dead-end jobs offering too little pay to fulfill their material expectations, and secondly, they exhibited a particular form of habitus, which had become embodied through their gang membership, and was at odds with what was required within the conventional labour market. Thus, social practices and symbols, such as dress code, language, tattoos and hairstyle that were displayed through their bodies were defined as negative personal characteristics, making it difficult to be employed.

However, for those who decided to leave the gang, the inability to find a job elsewhere, but the need for an income to pay for their expenses, together with the pressure from their parents to work, left those who were to commit suicide with no option but to start working in their parents' shops, the family-run small businesses such as off-licences, kebab shops, and fish and chips takeaways. These jobs were considered by the second-generation AK participants to be 'donkey work' with no future prospects but for which they were not well equipped. The interviewees tell how the young men who had committed suicide felt that they were 'forced' to work and under such conditions only went to work involuntarily and irregularly, manifestations, according to Gibbs and Martin (1964) of anomie.

Therefore, apart from their isolation from the family, the other important consequence of gang culture was that the victims lost not only their chance of integration into the mainstream culture but also into their own ethnic community through work in the ethnic labour market. Differences in the expectations of parents and their offspring with regard to their future employment trajectories has been identified as one of the most important factors influencing the occurrence of suicide amongst young people (Rubinstein 2002; Hassan 1995; Hezel 1989). More importantly, their involvement in gangs pushed them away from the influence of another regulative institution, identified by Durkheim as 'economic society', which has a significant role in reducing anomie and suicide (Durkheim 1996). In addition, irregular work relations can be seen as evidence of a maladjustment into occupational status roles (Gibbs and Martin 1964) and this, as Durkheim points out, reduces the level of integration and regulation, which in turn increases the chances of anomic suicide (see also Rubinstein 1992; Hezel 1987; Hassan 1983).

Intimate relationships and masculinity

Perhaps it is not surprising that having failed in many ways in their social lives, the young men who committed suicide became over-dependent on their intimate relationships, relationships that however were highly problematic because of the masculine attitudes that had been developed through socializing in the gangs. Most of them quarreled with, and were rejected by their girlfriends prior to their suicide. The breakdown of these intimate relationships appears to have played a vital role in their decision to commit suicide, largely because the breakdown was perceived as a loss of honour (*cf.* Macdonald 2007; Scourfield 2005; Connell 2002). As a number of studies show (Shiner *et al.* 2009; Macdonald 2007; Scourfield 2005; Hassan 1996, 1995) suicides can be related to a 'crisis of masculinity' (Faludi 1999) or the erosion of the 'patriarchal dividend' resulting from changing gender relations (Connell 2002) and those especially who lack social and cultural capital are not able to adapt and cope with these new gender roles so suffer most from the crisis of masculinity (Whitehead 2008).

Those interviewed report how the suicide victims felt frustrated when their girlfriends took the initiative to break the relationship, but the breakdown in their intimate relationships must not be seen in itself as the reasons for the suicides. Rather for these young men, who were marginalized from both their ethnic community and mainstream

society, with little integration into the labour market and now cut lose from the regulating effect gained from gang membership, the breakup of their relationship represented the loss of the last social bond with society, leaving the individual more prone to suicide (Durkheim 1996; Shiner *et al.* 2009; Macdonald 2007; Scourfield 2005; Hassan 1995).

Conclusion: anomic suicide, zombie concepts and cosmopolitanism

It is clear that the social conditions in which the second-generation AK youth were raised are ones that can be characterized by cosmopolitanism. The cosmopolitan characteristics of the neighbourhood and schools, made up as they were of different and conflicting ethnic groups (in contrast to the first-generational AKs who whilst they had some experience of banal cosmopolitanism maintained a strong sense of community, supported by transnational engagements with the country of origin) provided a context within which the second generation, and particularly those who committed suicide, became marginalized from their own and mainstream society and took a path into the new rainbow underclass. Without doubt this cosmopolitan condition contributed to, and can in part account for, the eventual suicides as the institutions that had regulated and integrated the first-generation AKs ceased to function for the second. However, to understand this does not require a complete re-writing or abandonment of Durkheim's classical explanation for suicide. Whilst what Beck calls 'zombie concepts' are more obviously relevant to an understanding of the lack of suicide in the first-generation AKs (although paradoxically its cosmopolitan characteristics helped to create and sustain community cohesiveness) they are also relevant in understanding the incidence of suicide amongst the second generation as the cosmopolitan context itself creates the conditions for anomie.

The AK community in Turkey, with its very low suicide rates, corresponds to the type of a well-integrated community that Durkheim defines as 'mechanical solidarity'. The sense of belonging and community cohesion was achieved largely through isolation and the collective memories of a history of 'persecuted exclusion'. Inevitably, as an immigrant community, the post-migration experiences of the first-generation AKs show clearer aspects of cosmopolitanism, although the suicide rate remained low. Despite the first-generation AKs establishing and maintaining strong transnational connections, supporting Beck in the experience of migrants as transcending national

borders (Beck 2002; Morris 2013), their migration did not weaken the sense of community and the power to regulate and integrate its members. No doubt the UK, and particularly London as the society of reception, was highly heterogeneous and characterized by what Beck terms a 'banal cosmopolitanism' (Beck 2002: 28), the everyday experience of cultural diversity that was largely unavoidable when living and working in culturally diverse neighbourhoods. Nonetheless this did not mean that they were fully integrated into this cosmopolitan society or particularly affected by it. They 'protected' their communal sense of identity and cohesion by settling closely together in a particular part of London and by maintaining strong family and kinship networks, reinforced by a sense of a collective past history. In short, they followed an ethnic path adaptation that made them an internally coherent community with strong regulative and integrative mechanisms that reduced anomie and suicide. This 'segregated integration' into the ethnic community in many ways resembled the condition of Jewish communities that Durkheim had studied and just as the sense of the diaspora (a transnational concept) helped to maintain a sense of Jewish community despite geographical displacement, the transnational engagement with communities of origin also helped the first-generation AKs to experience a sense of continuity and connection.

Undoubtedly, the experiences of the second-generation AKs show far greater cosmopolitan characteristics, but understanding the sudden increase in suicide does not require the creation of a completely new set of concepts. Beck (2002: 31) argues that in a cosmopolitan society identities or belonging to a particular nation or community disappear. This was certainly the case for those who committed suicide as their segmented assimilation trajectory into the rainbow underclass meant the rejection of their own ethnic, as well as mainstream, values and goals, and they found it difficult, if not impossible, to identify with ethnic or mainstream British society. They did not abandon completely their ethnic (Kurdish), and religious (Alevi) identity but it served only as a situational one, which was articulated largely in opposition to other ethnic groups and gangs [9]. Whilst, as Beck (2006) claims, immigrants can belong simultaneously to both their community of origin and their community of settlement through transnational engagements, which was the case with the first generation, for the second-generation AKs TNEs were no longer relevant as these young men became marginalized from their own community in London, as well as mainstream British society. Instead, unable to integrate and feel a sense of belonging to either, they became

assimilated into the new rainbow underclass, with little sense of integration or regulation leading to a condition that corresponds to Durkheim's state of anomie.

We can, therefore, draw the following conclusion from this analysis. Even though the experience of the AK migrants (both the first generation, but particularly the second generation) show cosmopolitan characteristics as defined by Beck, understanding the high suicide rates amongst the second generation does not force us to abandon the 'zombie concepts' offered by Durkheim in explaining suicide. As demonstrated by Durkheim, and supported by many contemporary studies (Rubinstein 2002; Burr *et al.* 1999; Leavey 1999; Hassan 1995, 1983; Hezel 1989), high suicide rates are the consequence of a lack of regulation and integration, a symptom of the maladjustment of society. Therefore a consequence of the move towards cosmopolitanism, which by its diverse and transnational nature weakens local and national ties of belonging, is an increase in anomie. Whilst society has obviously changed, and there is a need to recognize that the cosmopolitan nature of society clearly requires an understanding of its peculiar nature and the experiences it engenders, it is still open to an analysis of the social (in all its forms: local/global; national/transnational) that are offered by classical theorists such as Durkheim.

Notes

[1] I would like to thank Celia Jenkins and Derrick Wright for their constructive feedback on the earlier drafts of the article. I would also like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their valuable critiques of the first draft.

[2] For Beck (2002) banal cosmopolitanism has to a large extent replaced banal nationalism, a characteristic of the first modernity. Banal cosmopolitanism refers to everyday, unconscious and often unintended forms of interactions that integrate people, often forcefully, into the global, cosmopolitan society. For example, people's consumption of food, music, fashion, *etc.* are global and transnational rather than national.

[3] Alevi is a contested term and its definition varies depending upon the position of the definer. However, for the purposes of this research, the term Alevi is used as an umbrella term to refer to a distinct religious/faith group predominantly residing in central Anatolia in Turkey in which context its boundaries are defined in contradistinction to Sunni Islam, the dominant religion in Turkey (for a detail discussion of this see Cetin, 2015).

[4] The majority of AKs come from provinces such as Maras, Sivas, Malatya, Dersim and Kayseri which are also known for the massacres of Alevis that have taken place in these areas (for further explanation on Alevi Massacres see, for example, Jongarden 2003 and McDowall, 2000).

[5] The ethnographic data was collected for my Ph.D. thesis, which was funded by and submitted to the Sociology Department at the University of Essex. The degree was awarded in May 2014. For this research, I conducted over forty in-depth interviews with first- and second-generation Alevis. For eight of the suicide cases I examined closely, I collected data by participating in funerals and interviewing the significant others who included parents, siblings, relatives and friends of suicides. I also interviewed three people who had attempted suicide. They made a significant contribution towards my analysis and judgment of the relevance of the themes emerging out of the ethnographic data. I did not conduct comparative research amongst other ethnic minorities in London, partly because of restrictions on time and resources, but largely because young male suicide was a 'public issues' for the AK community both in London and Turkey that deserved an in-depth sociological investigation in its own right. Also the lack of national data on the Alevi community, both in and outside Turkey, made a statistical comparison between them and other communities impossible. In addition, the number of cases of suicides amongst the second-generation Alevi youth is relatively small further making statistical comparison difficult, if not impossible, although their occurrence is nevertheless significant in the sense of suggesting an emergent pattern that required further in-depth investigation of a qualitative nature. Further discussion of the methodology can be found in Cetin, 2015.

[6] For a detailed account of the segmented assimilation theory see Portes A and Zhou M (1993) and Morawska (2009).

[7] As argued throughout this paper, the second generation share characteristics of the disadvantaged groups (rainbow underclass) that they belong to, but have the peculiarities of role reversal with regard to their parents and violent conflict with black youth.

[8] The term 'gang' was used by the respondents and whilst acknowledging the sociological and terminological problems associated with this concept, it is beyond the scope of this article to discuss them (*cf.* Esbensen F-A *et al*., 2001).

[9] In 2010, my colleague Dr Celia Jenkins and I were approached by the London Alevi Cultural Centre and Cemevi (LACCC) to help address the 'negative identity' of Alevi youth, which was seen as one of the primary 'causes' of youth suicide. What emerged from discussions with the young people was their sense of isolation, particularly at school, where no one knew or understood their religion. Working together with the LACCC and a primary school in London, which accommodated over ninety Alevi children, we introduced Alevism into the RE curriculum in order to help them develop a 'positive' sense of cultural and religious identity and belonging to both their ethno-religious community and wider British society through education. The project received a positive response and has been highly successful. This project has won the British Education Research Association (BERA) Prize for Joint Collaboration between Universities and Schools (see: https://www.bera.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Insights- 9-Alevi-community-for-web.pdf).

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