

Book Review of Jonsson,  
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*Integration Bland Unga: En  
Mångkulturell Generation  
växer Upp* [Integration  
Among the Youth: A  
Multicultural Generation  
Grows Up]. Stockholm:  
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**BOOK REVIEW**

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*Integration bland unga: En mångkulturell generation växer upp* is part of the *Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Survey in Four European Countries* (CILS<sub>4</sub>EU) project and presents the latest summary of Swedish results. The Swedish data covers 5,000 children, who have been interviewed in four successive waves between 2010 and 2016. Additional information has been collected from national registers for the years 2019–2020, and in some cases earlier. CILS<sub>4</sub>EU is a major research project based on panel surveys that focus on the integration of children of immigrants in Europe. The countries included are England, Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden (CILS<sub>4</sub>EU 2023). The authors of the book have five observation points for their data from 2010 to 2020. All the children studied were born in 1996, so they were between the ages of 14 and 24 at the time of the study. The authors of the book work at the Swedish Institute of Social Research, Stockholm University.

The book sets as its goal to provide empirical findings and theoretically informed discussion on the state and process of integration of children of immigrants in Sweden. It is targeted at a national audience: ‘Discussion on integration in Sweden needs a renewal. —[W]ith this book we will provide a factual ground for more constructive debates on integration’ (p. 11, all quotes are translated from Swedish by the author). Despite an explicit public interest, the book is written as a regular summary work of a large panel survey and leaves policy conclusions to the reader. Methodological discussion takes only a few pages, as those have been more extensively discussed in other works that are primarily targeted at researchers. However, the apparent fallout in follow-up panel surveys is noted (p. 47–48). The authors also mention several times that the children of immigrants born in 1996 might not be representative of those who have arrived in the 2000s, at least in terms of country of origin, because shares of origin countries vary over time. A notable feature of the Swedish immigrant population is the large share of people with refugee background (p. 208).

The central empirical part of the book is divided into five parts, all based on the authors’ view on integration, which is detailed in Chapter 1. The authors define integration as ‘likeness between groups in terms of (a) opportunities and rights, (b) social acceptance,

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social relations and social networks as well as (c) basic values' (p. 33). They study these through five dimensions: structural integration, social integration, cultural integration, political integration, and adaptation. The framework is quite extensive. While it would be easy to criticize for having too many dimensions, or, for example, the lack of a broader discussion of migrant health, the authors should actually be applauded for providing an exceptionally multifaceted picture of integration, which they also systematically follow in the study.

In Chapter 3, the authors conclude that structural integration (housing, school, higher education, economy, and work) is proceeding in many respects well for most of the youth, even though housing segregation, poorer households, and somewhat limited contact with majority youth are a reality for many. While children of immigrants do not perform as well in school as the national average, it does not influence their aims as much as expected. Quite on the contrary, many children of immigrants do have very high expectations for their future. However, a significant minority among them do not do that well. Most of the less well-to-do children have a refugee background, and many of them have migrated in their early teens and are part of the so-called generation 1.5.

Social integration (contact between groups,<sup>1</sup> ethnic social preference, partnerships, negative social relations, family and social capital, discrimination, and attitudes toward other groups) is presented in the book through the dynamic of ingroup preference versus positive contacts with other groups (p. 112–114). I think this is a welcome perspective, as many studies on migrants tend to focus more on majority society exclusion than migrants' own ingroup preferences, the latter of which obviously differs to an extent between groups. Social integration is not a major obstacle for most of the youth, and group relations are generally good, though varied between groups. Despite these mainly good relations, a clear social ingroup preference is found in many instances, including partnership formation (p. 150–152).

In Chapter 6, the authors present their finding(s) about cultural integration (ethnic identity, language, religion and religiosity, values, and attitudes) as the factor for the most significant differences. It seems that cultural issues are those where group boundaries are drawn. Those groups that, by their origin, divert the most from Swedish general cultural features and values are the same where we find the largest differences in terms of cultural integration. In the case of Sweden, this includes the Middle East and Northern and Eastern parts of Africa. Children with background in these areas are majority Muslim, but among them are also some other religious groups, including Christians. The authors' position on cultural change is based on Inglehart and Wenzel's (2005) value studies. Even though this study reports consistent changes in values toward the Swedish majority position, a clear gap still exists with few signs of forthcoming uniformity.

Political integration (Chapter 7) is not a main theme of the book, because the studied population is still quite young. Even though voting levels among children of immigrants are significantly lower than among their Swedish peers, the children of immigrants do have on average a higher interest in politics than majority youth. The authors challenge the view of children of immigrants as politically passive. In terms of adaptation (Chapter 8), which brings a social-psychological aspect to the study, the physical and mental wellbeing of the children is mainly similar between groups. A noteworthy aspect of psychological orientation is also the children's primarily optimistic view of the future.

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<sup>1</sup> For analytical purposes the authors use different types of groupings in different sections of the book that vary from country of origin to area of origin.

A brief section discusses integration from a comparative perspective in the four CILS<sub>4</sub>EU countries. The authors note that the differences between countries were unsystematic and mainly small, and no clear results based on different immigration or integration policies were found. In all of the countries, differences in integration were largest among those who migrated from the Middle East and Northern and Eastern Africa, whereas children of migrants from most of the countries showed only smaller differences compared to the majority population. However, a key result for all countries is that differences between the children of immigrants and the majority population seem to be of somewhat permanent nature, at least in the first and second generation and more so among children of immigrants from the Middle East and Africa (p. 208–212).


The results of the study can be summarized as follows. Integration takes place in different ways for different groups. Structural integration is where the authors find the greatest advances toward group similarity, and cultural integration is where the gap remains widest. The authors provide a shorthand for their key result: ‘separate societies and selective integration’ (p. 213). While the book provides an overall positive evaluation about the state of affairs, it is clear that an important part of the youth remains significantly behind (p. 225–228). In my opinion, it is this large minority that creates a sense of worry, and certainly a deserved one.

*Integration bland unga: En mångkulturell generation växer upp* is a major contribution to the study of children of immigrants in Sweden, the Nordic countries, and Europe, as it provides a unique view of a single cohort of children of immigrants over a period of 10 years. Even though the book is primarily written for a national audience, and hence accessible to only those who read Swedish, it provides much food for thought. That integration takes many forms and proceeds differently among various groups is no news for the basic integration researcher, but the picture given is detailed enough to support study designs in other countries and provide opportunities to consider one’s own research findings. The book can be used as reference and support literature in university courses dealing with migrant integration, as well as general introductory reading to empirical research on migrant integration in the Nordic countries. For those who are interested in the big picture of integration, intergenerational changes, and the children of immigrants in the Nordic countries, I cannot think of a good enough excuse for not reading the book.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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