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Transition to adulthood of descendants of Turkish immigrants in France: the interplay between leaving parental home, labor-market entry, and union formation

Introduction

International migrants face the twofold challenge of integrating into the host society and reconciling sometimes conflicting social and cultural demands from their country of origin. For immigrants from countries with a Muslim tradition who moved to Western Europe, the demographic patterns in Western European destination countries are often quite divergent. If we can observe important demographic changes in the emigration countries, such as an increase in the age at the first union and a fall in the fertility rate, these changes are quite recent trends and concern younger cohorts and recent emigrants respectively. A large share of the immigrants, who live in Western Europe today, left their country at a period when these changes had not occurred yet. In their host countries, immigrants find themselves confronted with an individualistic society, a growing diversification of living forms, and persistent low fertility as opposed to strong family ties, universality of marriage, and higher fertility in their countries of origin.

Today, around 3 millions of Turkish immigrants live in Europe. France has been one of the countries which received immigrant workers from Turkey from 1960 on. More than 20 years after they came to France, very few immigrants from Turkey have become French nationals. Professionally, they still mostly hold working class positions, with a significant group of independent workers, i.e. shopkeepers and craftsmen. Like Moroccan women, few Turkish women attempt to integrate into the job market, contributing to the highest unemployment rate among immigrant women. With no qualifications and poor French language skills,

opportunities seem limited for them. Family networks, residential concentration, and associative structures are all contributing to the social organization of the Turkish community and make up a pool of resources. Although not being the most prominent immigrant group in terms of numbers, such pattern makes the Turkish community visible in the public sphere and tends to isolate its members from other groups (Algerian, Moroccan, Portuguese, and Sub-Saharan African). Around 220.000 Turkish immigrants live in France and their share among the immigrant population is growing. Today, the descendants of the first immigrant workers are in the phase of the transition to adulthood and family formation.

A new project called The Integration of the European Second Generation (TIES) has been launched in 2003 in order to pay special attention to the women and men of the second generation who live in eight Western European countries.

Our paper focuses on the transition to adulthood of women and men of the second generation of Turkish descent in France. We thereby understand leaving parental home, union formation, and the labor-market entry as well as the interplay between these processes. The goal of our paper is to explore the patterns of these transitions.

Framework

Our main research question is: Does the transition to adulthood of second generation Turks in France resemble the natives' one? If not, what are the differences and their causes? We work with two competing hypothesis: If the patterns of Turkish second generation women and men are similar to the natives' one, this supports the hypothesis of socialization. That is that the influence of the values, norms and behaviors at the place where the individual has been growing up is most influential. Since the survey we work with addresses exclusively migrant children who were born in France, the data set is an excellent source in order to test the socialization hypothesis. Contradicting to this, we hypothesize that the demographic behavior of young women and men of Turkish descent is similar to the one in Turkey, thus indicating that they maintain values and norms as dominant in their parents' country of origin. If this is the case, this would support the hypothesis of segmented assimilation. A similar assumption can be drawn from the framework of the demographic behavior of minority groups. According to these considerations, a social cohesion may be desired among the members of the groups that is ensured by shared cultural norms and bonds.

The choice of a partner (mainly of the spouse) is often seen as an indicator which of the hypotheses is true. Nevertheless, only few studies have been carried out on the union formation of the second generation in Western European countries so far. The theoretical

framework of our analysis of the transition to a union includes two main aspects: the characteristics of the partner and the partnership type (direct marriage or non-marital cohabitation). Previous studies show that both women and men prefer a partner of a country background that is similar to their own. In case of the second generation that refers mainly to a person who or whose parents migrated from the same country to France. The “Histoire familiale” survey, that was conducted in 1999, has shown that the the rate of mixed marriages of Turkish immigrants living in France is very low compared with other immigrant groups. This result is explained by the low level of education in this population. Studies show that the likelihood of a mixed marriage with someone who has a French background is higher the higher the educational attainment of the two persons is. We can expect that this rate is much higher among the children of immigrants born in France. Therefore, we pay attention to the migration background of the partner and ask also about a transnational marriage market. But we also pay attention to the parents level of education, their socio-economic status and their level of French language skills.

Data and method

Until recently, France had no statistical data which could be used to describe and analyze the second generation. The only census data collected referred to the nationality and country of birth of individuals. Administrative sources do not give more information than nationality, and, in most cases, handling of this variable is not published in tables. The contours of “immigrant” populations were often defined on the basis of the legal nationality of a person and this has only recently been changed.

We use a new data set on The Integration of the European Second Generation (TIES). The survey is being carried out in France, The Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, Spain, Austria, and Switzerland. France is one of the first countries in this project where the data is available for analysis. The French sample includes about 500 persons with one or two parents born in Turkey. The respondents themselves were born in France. The number of persons with two parents born in France in the sample is 351. The age of the respondents is 18 to 35 years and they live in two cities, these are Paris and Strasbourg.

We apply intensity-regression analysis to leaving parental home, transition to the first union of women and men, and to the labor-market entry and give special attention to the role of the cultural and the family background – education of parents, number of siblings, as well as the social ties as they are maintained to persons in Turkey.

Preliminary results

Preliminary analysis of the data suggests that persons of the Turkish community maintain patterns of these transitions as they are common in Turkey, but not necessarily in France.

The first results show that women and men of the second generation of Turkish descent leave the parental home later than native French. Among descendants of Turkish origin, the main reason for leaving the parental home is a marriage whereas women and men of French origin leave for education or work and are more likely to live alone or in non-marital cohabitation.

Living alone is not a common situation for second generation of Turkish origin, even for those who are above 25 years old. French natives leave their parental household earlier and are more likely to stay alone without having a partnership. At age 30 years, 90 percent of the natives have left their parental home, but only 60 percent of second generation of Turkish origin. As the descendants of Turkish migrants are younger than the natives in the TIES sample, they are less frequently engaged in a relationship.

In most of the marriages the partner is a Turkish migrant. One could think that this Turkish migrant partner could belong to the 1.5 generation and has arrived in his/her early ages in France. But in our sample, the Turkish migrants partner came after age 18 in 80 percent of the cases. Only a minority of the partners are from the second generation. Even if the sample is small, the ethnic endogamy seems to be very strong. The second generation seems to be connected to the matrimonial market in Turkey (which has also been shown for Germany, the country with the biggest Turkish community in Europe).

The connection to the marriage market in Turkey and, accordingly, the maintenance of values and norms seems to be confirmed by the attitudes towards a “white wedding”. The norm of virginity at the marriage was abandoned in France in the 1960s. For the Turkish second generation, virginity is still the shared norm, as the findings from the TIES survey show. Consistent with findings for Turkey, women are more attached to the virginity norm in their declaration than men. These findings are also consistent with former observations in France in the 1960s.