

To leave or not to leave?

The importance of practical constraints and individual attitudes for leaving home of Turkish, Moroccan and Dutch young adults.

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Introduction

Leaving home is often perceived as the first step towards independence for young adults in western societies nowadays. The delay of union- and family formation choices makes that many young adults live on their own or with an unmarried partner after moving out of the parental home. In many non-western societies leaving home is still linked to marriage and family formation. This is suggested to be also the case for young adults with a migrant origin who grow up in western societies. Up to now empirical studies have, however, only fragmentary covered the patterns of leaving home among immigrant groups (Boyd, 2000; Burr & Mutchler, 1993). In this paper we study leaving home among Turkish, Moroccan and Dutch young adults living in the Netherlands. We cover both the timing, the reasons for leaving home, and the destination after moving out.

First aim of our paper is to assess differences and similarities in the timing and reasons for leaving home as well as the destinations after moving out for immigrant and Dutch young adults. Secondly, we want to assess the importance of practical constraints and individual attitudes for moving out of the parental home. We question how and to what extent practical constraints and individual attitudes affect choices regarding leaving home for Turkish, Moroccan and Dutch young adults.

Theoretical background

Previous studies on leaving home have brought up that practical (economic) constraints as well as attitudes and norms may influence choices of leaving the parental home (De Jong Gierveld, Liefbroer & Beekink, 1991; Billari & Liefbroer, 2007; Mitchell, Wister & Burch, 1989). Most studies on leaving home, however, include the native population of the country only (Baanders, 1998). Much less is known on leaving home of non-western immigrant youth growing up in a western host society. The relative importance of practical (economic) considerations and attitudes regarding intergenerational relations for leaving home among immigrant populations is still rather unexplored (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1993; Waite et al., 1986). In addition, the available studies often exclusively focus on the timing of moving out. A previous study on ethnic differences in leaving home for the Netherlands for example suggested that timing of leaving home is not essentially different for Dutch and immigrant youth (De Valk & Billari 2007). Nevertheless, the reasons for moving out and the importance of practical considerations and individual attitudes for this choice could very well differ between ethnic groups.

It has been theorized that in western societies individual autonomy in decision making has increased in the past decades. This suggests that timing and reasons for leaving home may highly vary between individuals. Cross-cultural comparisons have, however, indicated that societies differ in their focus on the individual in decision making. Contrary to the more individualistic orientation in Dutch society, Turkish and Moroccan society are more collectivistic. In the latter societies the family takes central stage and life course decisions are thought to affect not only the individual but also the family. Given the more collective orientation among immigrant families with these ethnic origins one could expect that norms on timing are more important in immigrant families than among Dutch families. A second aspect of the individual orientation in western societies is that major life transitions are

postponed. This is for example reflected in the fact that marriage is delayed and a period of living independently or cohabitation with an unmarried partner is nowadays common.

However, early marriage is still central in the Turkish and Moroccan culture.

Based on these theoretical considerations we formulated three general hypotheses. First: we expect that Dutch young adults leave home because of individual oriented reasons and Turkish and Moroccan young adults have reasons related to family formation (*H1*). Second, we hypothesize that Dutch young adults will live on their own or cohabit with an unmarried partner after moving out more often than is the case for Turkish and Moroccan young adults who are more likely to live with a married partner (*H2*). Finally, we expect that leaving home is determined by both practical constraints and individual attitudes towards intergenerational relations and partnerships. For Turkish and Moroccan youth these attitudes are expected to be even more important than for Dutch young adults (*H3*).

It has, furthermore, been broadly documented that women overall leave the parental home at a younger age than men. At the same time it is much less well known whether the same reasons for moving out apply to both men and women. A study by Aassve, Billari and Ongaro (2001) on Italy for example reported that economic circumstances, in particular (personal) income resources are essential for staying or leaving the parental home but that this was especially the case for men. For women it were reasons related to union formation (like finding a partner) that were found to be crucial in their decision to leave the parental home. The behavior of Turkish and Moroccan women and their role within the family is still thought to be more bound by clear expectations than is nowadays the case for Dutch women. Traditionally women in Turkey and Morocco moved in with their partner's family after marriage. This makes that we expect that moving out of Turkish and Moroccan women is less related to practical (economic) constraints than is the case for Dutch women (*H4*).

Data and analyses

Data come from the Family and Fertility Survey (*Onderzoek Gezinsvorming; OG*) 2003 and the additional survey among young (children of) immigrants of Turkish and Moroccan origin (*Onderzoek Gezinsvorming Jonge Allochtonen; OGJA*). The OG survey, which is executed every five years, aims to gather information on union and family formation as well as its determinants. The data were gathered in the period February to June 2003 by Statistics Netherlands. The OG includes 3.900 men and 4.200 women between the ages of 18 and 62 years.

The OGJA survey was carried out between January and April 2004. This additional immigrant sample was drawn because the OG is a sample of the total population residing in the Netherlands only including immigrants proportionally. The OGJA aimed at young adults of Turkish and Moroccan origin between the ages of 18-27 years who were born in the Netherlands (second generation) or who immigrated to the Netherlands before the age of 6 (first generation). The total sample includes 991 respondents equally distributed between the Turkish and Moroccan origin group. For the Dutch comparison group we selected respondents from the OG between the ages of 18 and 27 years. The OG and OGJA dataset are pooled for analyses.

The descriptive part of the analysis provides insight in the timing and reasons for leaving home for each of the three distinguished groups. The data include information both on the reasons for leaving home given by the young adult as well as on the 'destination' after moving out of the parental home. In the multivariate analyses we will test whether practical constraints versus individual attitudes are of importance for leaving the parental home and the destination after moving out for Turkish, Moroccan and Dutch young adults.

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