



## UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

### Generation in transition: Youth transitions among native-born descendants of immigrants from Turkey

Keskiner, E.

**Publication date**  
2013

[Link to publication](#)

#### **Citation for published version (APA):**

Keskiner, E. (2013). *Generation in transition: Youth transitions among native-born descendants of immigrants from Turkey*.

#### **General rights**

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

#### **Disclaimer/Complaints regulations**

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

# 2: Theoretical Framework

## 1. Introduction

The current study aims to explore the youth transition experience of native-born descendants of immigrants from Turkey living in Amsterdam and Strasbourg. These are young people who have been born and raised in Amsterdam and Strasbourg but whose parents have arrived in these cities or in the host countries as immigrants from Turkey.

First of all, the study is inspired by the rich literature on transitions in youth sociology, which examines and embraces the complexity of youth transition experiences today (Furlong, 2009). On the one hand, the study aims to contribute to the literature on youth transitions by focusing on the descendants of immigrants, whose distinctiveness in youth transitions has been documented but not studied in depth. On the other, it applies the propositions and theoretical discussions of youth transition studies to the case of native-born descendants of immigrants and tries to bring an alternative perspective to the field of second-generation research by analysing youth transitions as an ongoing process, rather than as an outcome. Pursuing a retrospective approach, the study will highlight how young people's trajectories are continuously shaped and re-shaped from secondary education into the labour market.

Furthermore, by applying a comparative analysis, the study will compare and contrast both the institutions and the experience of young people across two distinct settings; Amsterdam and Strasbourg. In so doing, it aims to explore how significant cross-national and cross-city differences in education systems and labour markets are in shaping the experience of descendants of immigrants (Crul et al., 2012, Van De Werfhorst and Mijs, 2010).

This chapter sets out to refine a theoretical lens through which to approach the study of youth transitions. It is organized into three sections: In the first, the debate in youth transitions research will be reviewed. In the second, the literature on descendants of immigrants in Turkey will be analysed, and the concept of a "second-generation" will be evaluated, and its applicability to this study questioned.

Finally, the last section will outline the conceptual tools that will be applied to understand the process of youth transitions.

## **2. Youth Transitions**

### **2.1. Youth Transitions Today**

Traditionally youth transitions were defined as the period from leaving full-time education to entering the labour market to work in a full-time job (Mueller and Shavit, 1998). However over the last two decades, there has been an on-going debate about the “changing” nature of youth transitions. Most studies concur that the nature of youth transitions today are attributable to structural transformations, particularly the transition to post-industrial economies in Western-Europe, the booming service economy and increasing neoliberal practices in both education and the labour market (du Bois-Reymond, 2009b, Evans, 2002, Furlong, 2009, Wyn and Dwyer, 1999). Below the changing features of youth transitions will be presented.

#### *Prolonged and Complex Transitions*

Due to the increasing importance of credentials in the current “knowledge” economy, in most Western European countries today, young people stay longer in school, delaying their entry into labour market (Bradley and Devadason, 2008, du Bois-Reymond, 1998). This trend is observed in both the Netherlands and France. In France, the proportion of lyceum diploma (*baccalauréat*) holders had reached 70% by 1996 (Duru-Bellat, 2000) as a result of policies aiming at “the *baccalauréat* for 80% of an age group” (Duru-Bellat and Kieffer, 2008). In the Netherlands in the early 1990s, a debate began over whether to encourage a minimum qualification level (*startkwalificaties*) that necessitated young people staying in school until they acquired a post-secondary vocational degree (MBO-K Opleiding) in the hope of facilitating smoother labour market transition (Tesser and Veenman, 1997).

The extension of schooling both postpones entry into the labour market and also leads to the blurring of the concept of “transition point” as young people start working while they are studying or go back to studying after having entered employment. More and more often, there is no clear-cut boundary or linearity between work and study, and hence the transitions are becoming more complex (Heinz, 2009, Wyn and Dwyer, 1999).

The complex nature of transitions is also construed as a response to increasing risks and responsibilities (Evans and Furlong, 1996, Furlong, 1998). For the students who feel the need to prolong their studies but lack the financial means to do so, resorting to employment is the only way in which they can manage their studies. For example, in the Netherlands, increasing pressures to extend one’s studies is accompanied by decreasing financial assistance, where the state is

renouncing its role in subsidizing education, transferring responsibility to students and their families (Vossensteyn, 2002). In France, only a limited number of students receive assistance and student employment still provides the biggest proportion of students' incomes (OVE, 2006). Furthermore, due to growing youth unemployment or risk in the labour market during times of economic crisis, young people might also feel the need to try to build employment experience while they are studying.

On the one hand, these trends highlight the importance of structural conditions such as student finance systems or the availability of student employment. On the other, they underline the significance of families and family resources in successfully prolonging education and facilitating smooth labour market transitions (Weis, 2009). Therefore, in the current study, the prolonged and complex nature of transition is not taken for granted. On the contrary, both the prolongation of youth transitions and the complexities it entails are studied carefully with respect to establishing the conditions under which some manage to extend their studies and others do not.

### *Retrospective Transitions*

According to Dubet, young people's studies have not only been extended today, but the importance of school in determining young people's chances in the labour market has also intensified (Dubet, 2003). As a result, education occupies a central place in young people's lives in determining, shaping and reproducing conditions and inequalities (ibid). Likewise, Bourdieu argues that understanding social mobility requires that researchers should go beyond studying the status differences between fathers and sons, but rather try to understand how schools reproduce the "chances" of individuals via distributing tags of "success" or "failure"; stamps that they will carry into their futures (Bourdieu, 1990, Bourdieu and Clough, 1996).

In the two countries in this study, young people are stratified into distinct educational tracks at the beginning of or during secondary education. Social stratification studies have repeatedly demonstrated that early tracking and the form of such tracking have implications for the educational attainment of students (Bol and Van De Werfhorst, 2012) and for the future transition trajectories of young people into the labour market (Van De Werfhorst Mijs, 2010, Iannelli and Raffe, 2007, Kerckhoff, 2001, Raffe, 2009).

As a result, a thorough understanding of transition experiences requires researchers to challenge the idea of the school-to-work transition as a single event at a particular point in time, instead examining it as extending over the entire course of education and into early labour market experience (Raffe, 2009). Therefore, the current study pursues a retrospective approach, beginning its analysis of transition at early tracking in education. The retrospective approach also underlines the importance of studying youth transitions as *processes* rather than outcomes. Starting

the analysis of the transitions from early schooling emphasizes that transition is an ongoing process for young people.

While many researchers acknowledge the above-mentioned trends in youth transitions (Bradley and Devadason, 2008, du Bois-Reymond, 2009b, Furlong, 2009, Heinz, 2009), there is scope for debate about the implications and consequences of these transformations in the lives of the young people. This debate centres on the interplay between structure and agency during transition, and the positions that youth researchers take in this debate influence the way in which they explain and categorize youth transition patterns, as we will see below.

## 2.2. The Structure and Agency Debate in Youth Transition Studies

There is an ongoing debate in youth sociology about the degree of the role of structure and agency in youth transitions. Researchers' position regarding the interplay between structure and agency influence the terminologies they use for explaining transitions, as well as the different forms of transitions they propose. In the mid-1970s, Ashton and Field's influential study *Young Workers* utilized the concepts of "pathways" and "routes" and defined the three traditional forms of transition dominated either by work, further study or inactivity (Ashton and Field, 1976). According to Evans and Furlong (Evans and Furlong, 1996), due to a functionalist concern with social reproduction, many similar studies in the 1960s and 1970s relied on concepts of "niches", "pathways" or "routes", which remain too limited to help understand today's transitions. In the 1980s, the concept of "trajectories" was popularized by Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1984), and emphasized social trajectories travelled in social space. The concept of trajectory was later criticized in its turn for laying too much emphasis on the role of structure over agency and ignoring the importance of individual aspirations in youth transitions (Evans and Furlong, 1996, Raffe, 2003). Recently, the most popular formulation for understanding youth transitions has been "navigations" (du Bois-Reymond, 2009b, Heinz, 2009), which emphasizes the reflexive biographies of young people and the growing role of agency in transition processes.

This latest focus owes much to the theories of Beck (Beck, 1992) and Giddens (Giddens, 1991), which have been influential in stimulating debate on the individualization of youth transitions (du Bois-Reymond, 1998, Evans and Furlong, 1996, Furlong, 1998). Beck argued that insecure labour market conditions, such as increasing unemployment and precarious employment contracts, generate a "risk society" in which people are compelled to "navigate" their biographies, resulting in an increasing individualization of practices and a declining significance of and attachment to forms of collectivity, such as social class, gender, marriage and family (Beck, 1992, Beck, 2007). In a similar vein, Giddens (1991) argues that individuals today are forced to be conscious of who they are, what they want, and what they

feel. They become “the authors of their own autobiographies”, which makes them responsible for undertaking a “reflexive” process of building “them-selves” (p. 72).

Before I go on to explain how individualization theory has influenced the understanding of youth transitions, it is worth noting certain critiques that this viewpoint received both within and outside youth sociology. One of the first was by Furlong and Cartmel, who argued that increasing role of agency was mostly evident in discourses, while research showed persisting inequalities along the lines of social class, gender, and age (Furlong, 1998). Hence, “full-of-agency” accounts of young people were seen to generate an epistemological fallacy (ibid). Likewise, Atkinson argued that, despite the myth of reflexive worker, class background might still be the most significant determinant of young people’s biographies<sup>4</sup> (Atkinson, 2007, Atkinson, 2010). Skeggs(2004a) has also warned against the construct of the reflexive worker, whose agency and power to navigate would seem even stronger than the one proposed by rational action theory, since it ignores the unequal structural conditions and uneven access to resources and knowledge available to people when supposedly steering their biographies. Hence, understanding agency requires close attention to the structures surrounding the young people as well as the resources available to help them navigate their transitions.

In the late 1990s, in order to overcome structure-agency dichotomy in youth transitions, Rudd and Evans (1998) proposed the concept of “structured individualization”, which acknowledges the role and power of agency but also accept the influence of social structures due to persisting inequalities based on social class and gender. Later, Evans (2002) developed the concept of “bounded agency”, which again highlighted the dualistic nature of accounts and experiences; while young people are trying to navigate their own biographies, they are nevertheless bounded by structures particular to them. Evans explores this bounding, noting that young people’s frames of reference have roots in class, ethnicity and gender, but are also informed by their previous experience in education and the labour market.

These discussions of the individualization of youth transitions were very influential among certain sociologists, and led to the description of new forms of transitions. In fact, Du Bois-Reymond (du Bois-Reymond, 1998) relates individualization theory to the changing nature of youth transitions and the different forms they take. She introduced the concept of “choice biographies” to define the transition

---

<sup>4</sup> In his reply to Atkinson, Beck revisited his individualization thesis, making a distinction between ‘individualization’ and ‘individualism’. Individualization is about the individualization of risks and responsibilities, where institutions and structures deem the ‘individual’ as solely accountable, whereas ‘individualism’ attributes more control and agency to the individual over his or her actions (Beck, 2007). Nevertheless, while Beck’s proposition of the ‘individualization’ of risks and responsibilities suggests the neo-liberal practices dominating the lives of young people today, whether this leads to the increasing power of individual agents remains problematic, due to persisting inequalities along class lines.

processes of young people who do not follow the predicted (traditional) pathways, and instead “navigate” non-traditional transitions by incorporating their lifestyles and tastes into their biographies. This study was crucial in documenting the role of agency beyond young people’s discourses in their transition practices. Nevertheless, Du Bois-Reymond underlined that most of the respondents following “choice biographies” originated from privileged backgrounds, though such life patterns were also spreading to young people from lower social classes. More recently, in a comparative study of various Western and Eastern European countries, Walther, Du Bois-Reymond and Biggart (Walther, 2006) and their research team focused on “yo-yo” transitions, in which young people’s transitions had been somehow disturbed and they were shifting between various statuses over an extended transition period. The concept of yo-yo transitions is based on the idea of complexity in transitions. While some transitions seemed dominated by stagnant or downwardly mobile trends, researchers also suggested “alternative” patterns, whereby not only those from privileged backgrounds, as in the choice biographies, but also those from disadvantaged backgrounds, achieved stable positions—finding ways back into employment, or setting up their own businesses—by “deliberately choosing, to a greater or a lesser extent, to pursue alternative pathways” (p. 117).

After analysing early labour market careers rather than the traditional forms of transitions, Harriet Bradley and her research team in Bristol concurred about the existence of non-traditional or shifting transitions. However the ‘shifter’ transitions they discovered did not always symbolize increased agency and freedom (Bradley and Devadason, 2008, Fenton and Dermott, 2006). On the contrary, their findings highlight that these non-traditional biographies, shifting between different educational and work statuses, are also the results of labour market insecurities, meaning that young people did not necessarily feel able to “navigate” their biographies as Beck (Beck, 1992) had anticipated. While both the yo-yo study and the study of Bradley and Devadason acknowledge the emergence of non-traditional forms of transitions, their interpretations of this pattern differ.

All in all, despite the increasing influence of agency-based accounts (Evans, 2002, Furlong, 1998, Furlong, 2009) and the alternative transition pathways documented by researchers (Bradley and Devadason, 2008, du Bois-Reymond, 1998, Plug and Bois-Reymond, 2006), the majority of youth transition researchers concur on the fact that both social and institutional structures continue to play a significant role in shaping youth transitions. While they agree that young people increasingly “navigate” their transitions, they also underline that not all young people are able to navigate to the same extent (du Bois-Reymond, 2009b). As a result, who can navigate and to what extent depends on both institutional and social structures as well as the interaction between these structures and the agency.

In a recent comparative study of Germany and Canada, Lehmann (Lehmann, 2004, Lehmann, 2007) utilizes Bourdieu’s theoretical framework in understanding youth

transitions as practice. He shows how the concepts of cultural capital and habitus are instrumental in understanding how agency and structure constantly shape and reproduce each other (p. 83). Thus not only can we understand the aspirations and motivations of individuals in relation to their structural reality, but also how young people's practices in the present and future are continuously informed and reshaped by their past experience (p. 89).

Thus, applying Bourdieu's vision does not deny the power of agency, but actually contextualizes this agency and how it functions in relation to structure through its shaping effect on young people's understandings (habitus). This is not to say that all individuals are doomed by the structures around them; yet irrespective of whether young people transform or reproduce their initial conditions, they do it in relation to and within the limits of their structural conditions. Furthermore Bourdieu's theoretical concepts are particularly helpful in understanding how the practice of youth transitions and also social class function in different structures in reproducing or overcoming difficulties at a micro level (Savage et al., 2005). While individualization theories of can be useful in understanding how risks and responsibilities are funnelled through neoliberal practices that deem "the individual" most responsible for his or her own biography, they fail to explain how both institutional and social structures continue to shape the lives of young people who nevertheless continue to think they are the captains of their own ships. With regard to social structures, this study will explore what kind of role parental social class—understood through the availability of different forms of capital and resources—plays throughout the transition process. The significance of gender roles and the gendered forms of capital of the respondents will also be highlighted in understanding the practice of youth transition.

As well as social structures such as social class and gender, the study is concerned to compare the role of institutional structures such as education systems and labour markets during youth transitions. Many comparative studies of youth transitions have admitted the significance of distinct institutional structures in shaping a particular local "practice" of youth transition. In one of the initial studies comparing youth transition trends in Germany with those in the UK, Rudd and Evans (1996) suggested that transitions are bounded by localities and should be understood in the light of the local structures. Studies in youth transitions are thus dependent on their contexts and time; du Bois-Reymond's aforementioned study on choice biographies was situated in the Netherlands in the 1990s, while Bradley and Devadason (Bradley and Devadason, 2008) talk about transitions in UK in the 2000s. Furthermore, institutional structures are not only country-dependant but also city-specific. Bradley's study (2008) was situated in Bristol, and the researchers underlined that the biographies they talk about are strongly related to the transitional post-industrial economy of Bristol and what it could offer to young people (Bradley and Devadason, 2008). Nevertheless, when Devadason compared



the transition motivations of young people in Gotenbeurg and Bristol, he argued that the majority of the differences in institutional structures were observed on a macro, national level, rather than at the city level (Devadason, 2008). Hence, both city- and country-level institutional differences should be taken into account when interpreting youth transitions.

To summarize, both social and institutional structures will receive deliberate emphasis in understanding youth transitions as a practice without ignoring the role of agency and the ways individuals deal with given structures.

### **3. Youth Transitions and Descendants of Immigrants**

Despite increasing discussions of the enhanced role of individuals in shaping their own biographies, many studies still stress the unequal conditions under which young people undergo transitions; and especially when discussing the experience of “ethnic minority youth” (Evans, 2002, Evans and Furlong, 1996, Lehmann, 2007, Plug and Bois-Reymond, 2006, Webster, 2009). Yet this term covers a large group of young people, including both immigrants and the descendants of immigrants, whether born in the host countries or in the country of their parents. Regarding the “unequal conditions” faced by these groups, researchers have often underlined the discriminatory practices or unequal access to resources they face during transitions from school to work. Previous youth transitions studies have also identified differential transition pathways among young people categorized as ethnic minority youth compared to the majority group (Evans, 2002, Lehmann, 2007, Plug and Bois-Reymond, 2006). However, some studies have had difficulty interpreting the transition trajectories of the descendants of immigrants; since some of them had pathways which were distinct from those of other respondents, they have been bracketed off into a category of “other transitions” (Plug and Bois-Reymond, 2006). Because transition studies have not been previously focused entirely on the descendants of immigrants, they have not yet gathered enough data from this group to draw conclusions about its transition patterns (Evans, 2002, Lehmann, 2007).

The focus of this study on the youth transitions among the descendants of immigrants does not imply that this group necessarily experiences “distinct” types of transitions. Nevertheless, it will explore whether having migrant parents—who may or may not have distinct resources or forms of capital—influences the transition experience of young people in distinct settings. This is because one of the starting points of this study is the experience of transition in particular structural conditions (in Amsterdam and Strasbourg), and because it aims to discover whether or not having immigrant parents *in itself* has an influence on an individual’s transition process.

I assume two ways in which parents' migration backgrounds could be influential in shaping their descendants' transitions. One is through possessing and providing different forms of resources and capital, and the other is through the potential external categorization attached to having migrant parents or being associated with a certain "ethnic" community. The former will be explored through different forms of capital embodied or acquired by the migrant parents, and is explained in detail below in the theoretical framework. The latter will be difficult to fully capture, though it will be explored through the respondents' own perspectives on how their experiences during transition relate to feelings and experiences of exclusion or discrimination. Furthermore, this experience of exclusion does not necessarily arise from young people's explicit self-association with a group, but is rather an external categorization which might lead to their being stereotyped, discriminated against or excluded (Jenkins, 2003). The degree of the exclusion might depend on the size and the visibility of the immigrant group and their descendants in a given context, certain stereotypes that are popularized in society, historical and power relations existing between the countries of emigration and immigration, as well as ongoing relations between countries.

### 3.1. The Native-Born Descendants of Immigrants from Turkey

Through its specific focus on the youth transition experiences of descendants of immigrants from Turkey, this study also aims to make a contribution to the growing number of studies the children of Turkish immigrants. Immigrants from Turkey and their descendants form one of the largest groups in those Western European countries that received guest-worker migration or other substantial migration flows from Turkey (Abadan-Unat, 1976, Akgunduz, 2008, Vermeulen and Penninx, 2000). In education, native-born descendants of immigrants from Turkey seem to perform worse than their peers with native-born parents, and studies have underlined that this disadvantage correlates strongly with parental social class (Heath et al., 2008). Several recent studies highlight the role of education systems in shaping the achievement of descendants of immigrants more generally across various settings (Crul et al., 2012, Heath and Brinbaum, 2007, Heath et al., 2008, Schnell, 2012, Van De Werfhorst and Mijs, 2010). Other studies report that the descendants of immigrants suffer from comparatively poorer labour market progression and higher unemployment rates. Even controlling for education level, this group is still more disadvantaged in accessing both general employment (Fleischmann and Dronkers, 2007, Heath et al., 2008, Simon, 2003) and jobs that match their education level (Lessard-Philipps et al. 2012). Another area of research interest has been the school-to-work transition. These studies report that the descendants of immigrants are comparatively disadvantaged regarding both the length of unemployment after leaving school and the status of the first job (Bijwaard and Veenman, 2007, Brinbaum and Werquin, 1998, Silberman et al., 2007, Simon, 2003, Tesser and Dronkers, 2007). Furthermore a

recent study by Hushek (Huschek) showed that descendants of Turkish immigrants also have distinct union formation patterns compared to their peers with native born parents as they married earlier and usually with a partner from Turkey.

These studies have been crucial in setting stage and identifying the main areas of focus for the current study. This study aims to contribute to the debate by studying the youth transitions of young people with immigrant parents from Turkey; those mostly referred to in the literature as the Turkish second generation. In fact, the perspective of youth sociology already requires the dismantling of the generation concept and its implications for the current study.

### 3.2. 'Generation' Versus 'Second Generation'

This section will discuss the concepts of a “generation” in general and the “second generation” in particular, defining what they mean for the current study. This is important because “second generation” has become a generic one in the field of migration and ethnic studies which study the children or descendants of immigrants in both the U.S. (Kasinitz et al., 2008, Portes, 1996, Waldinger and Felician, 2004, Zhou et al., 2008) and Europe (Crul et al., 2012, Crul and Vermeulen, 2003, Kirszbaum et al., 2009, Simon, 2003).

In the field of youth sociology, the concept of a “generation” has been an evolving one, and there remain various definitions in use (Goodwin and O'Connor, 2009). The first and most popular is the demographic definition, which is indicative of subjects’ “birth cohorts” (Attias-Donfut et al., 2012). The second definition studies family linkages and the kinship between grandparents, parents and children, which Attias-Donfut et al. define as a subject’s “genealogical rung of ladder within a family lineage” (p. 41), and each cohort of parents symbolizes one generation. The third is Mannheim’s famous definition, which associated the concept with social change (Mannheim, 1952). Mannheim argues that people of same generation not only originate from similar age cohorts but also share and experience the same social, political, and economic milieu and a consciousness of being from that milieu. This consciousness might sometimes mobilize them against the previous generation and become the motor of social change (ibid). In that sense, Mannheim talks about a generation as a collective group able to bring about social or political change (Goertzel, 1972). In youth sociology, Wyn and Woodman (Wyn and Woodman, 2006) have revived the debate over the concept, suggesting that youth transitions should not be understood as a continuing rite of passage subject to the conditions and norms of previous generations, but that analysis should be based around a particular generation; in this case, the “post-1970 generation”. This is because, they argue, the cohorts born after 1970 experience similar social-economic conditions, and are subject to similar trends in government policy, resulting in a particular transformation of experiences, life-patterns and opinions. In this definition, “generation” refers to cohorts of people who are subject to similar

conditions but who do not necessarily organize around a common cause or a political aim.

Indeed, all three conceptualizations of generation listed above have been applied to or implied in the concept of a “second generation” when studying the children of immigrants. First, the term is utilized primarily as a demographic one, referring to the children of immigrant parents at least one of whom was born in the country of emigration. However, in relation to the children themselves, the demographic connotation varies. While some authors apply a strict definition and refer only to children of immigrants who are born and raised in the host country (Crul and Heering, 2008, Crul et al., 2012, Crul and Vermeulen, 2003), others utilize a broader category by including children who are born in the country of origin of the parents but received most of their schooling in the host country (Portes et al., 2009, Zhou, 1997, Zhou et al., 2008). As a result, the association between the term “second generation” and a given birth cohort is not always strict, and the definition usually ends up encompassing more than one “generation” as understood by year of birth (Santelli, 2004, Waters and Jimenez, 2005). Secondly, the terminology of a “second generation” underlines that the young people under study have immigrant parents, thus identifying and emphasizing family lineage. This is why members of the “second generation” are sometimes referred to as “second generation immigrants”; a self-contradictory construction which refers to the non-immigrant children of immigrants as immigrants (Portes et al., 2009). This usage clarifies that the term “generation” here functions to underscore the migrant heritage of the descendants (ibid). Third, the idea of an assumed generational “gap” was central in some usages; primarily in straight-line assimilation theory. Warner and Srole (Warner and Srole, 1945) use status attainment models to claim a status change across “generations”, hence presenting a “generation” as a motor of change:

Each consecutive ethnic generation pushes progressively farther out of the bottom level and into each of the successive layers above. That the class index of an ethnic group is related to the length of its settlement in the city is a manifestation of the continuous advance achieved in the hierarchy of each new generation (p. 72).

In this usage, a break from the previous generation is perceived to promote upward mobility and assimilation into the majority culture. However, with the new migration to the US and in Europe in the post-war era, researchers introduced new theories and approaches to understand the pathways travelled by the new immigrants and their descendants, rather than solely focusing on straight-line assimilation theory. Nevertheless, the concept of a “second generation” prevailed in the study of the children of immigrants, especially when comparing the experience of new second-generation groups with the old ones (Gans, 1992, Zhou, 1997). Furthermore, the term “second generation” and the theories that apply it, such as segmented assimilation theory, have been imported to the European context (Crul and Vermeulen, 2003, Silberman et al., 2007, Simon, 2003,

Vermeulen, 2010, Worbs, 2003). This is not to say that European researchers applied American theories without questioning their applicability; as they emphasized the distinctiveness of the immigrants and their descendants in Europe and called for an intra-European comparison as well as a transatlantic dialogue (Silberman et al., 2007, Thomson and Crul, 2007). Nevertheless, we can conclude that the popular comparisons between “old” and “new” “second generation” groups, both in Europe and the US, illustrate that the concept of a “second generation” cannot refer to a particular cohort of people. Instead, the terminology is used to refer to immigrants and their descendants originating from completely different contexts and migration flows. The application of the term in Europe and transatlantic comparisons of totally distinct migration flows demonstrate that “second generation” has been treated as a generic term to refer to “descendants of immigrants”, without defining their existence within a certain milieu or a certain cohort, which is the most common usage of generation in youth sociology (i.e. baby-boomer or post-1970 generation).

### *Refining the ‘Second Generation’ Concept*

This section will outline two major concerns when applying this terminology to the case of youth transition among the native-born descendants of immigrants from Turkey.

The first concern is that most studies of “second generation” subjects do not consistently reference a defined cohort or family lineage as is more usually done in youth sociology. Even a specific focus on the native-born children of Turkish immigrants from a particular city in Europe would encompass more than one cohort as the migration flows continued over decades, and the age of this “second generation” would range from 18 to 40. However, when studying youth transitions, it is crucial that the respondents share a similar age group. Moreover, if we take only those born in the same cohort, we (might) run the risk of mixing the “generations” with regards to family lineage and migration history, since the youngest children of the first arrivals and the 1.5 generation can be in a similar age cohort today (Santelli, 2012). Waters and Jimenez (Waters and Jimenez, 2005) put forward a similar critique of the term “generation” as a “measure” of assimilation to signal the distance from the initial migrant generation, especially for groups that are heterogeneous due to ongoing migration flows as second generation immigrants marry first generation immigrants. They do not argue that the “generation” concept should be dismissed altogether, but should rather be used with caution and correlated to birth cohorts. Santelli (Santelli, 2012) also follows this methodology in her study of social mobility among the descendants of immigrants. Hence, if the generation concept is to be utilized, then attention should be paid to both birth cohorts and family lineage so that the differences between generations and age groups are not subsumed under the category of second generation.

The second issue regards the assimilationist connotation of the generation concept, which parallels the social-change-related definition of generation in youth sociology. Abdelmalek Sayad (Sayad, 1994) opposes “second generation” terminology, arguing that the concept not only presupposes but also praises a generational rupture between the parents and children. Indeed, the generation concept was initially utilized by one-way assimilation theories that praised the rupture between native-born children and their immigrant parents (Warner and Srole, 1945). However, while recent “second generation” studies have continued to employ this terminology, they have acknowledged the multiple ways in which parents and their migratory trajectory are important to their descendants, and have underlined the significance of close relations with family and the wider “ethnic” community for success in education and labour market transition (Crul, 2000 ; Zhou, 1997 Zhou, 2005; Modood, 2004) Furthermore, in a recent study in New York City, Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, Waters and Holdaway highlighted how the descendants of immigrants are not “assimilating” into a mono-cultural majority but are in fact not only entering but also remaking the mainstream; transforming the society with their energy and creativity (Kasinitz et al., 2008). This perspective is distinct in the sense that it embraces change, cultural diversity, and continuity simultaneously. In the European setting, Crul and Schneider (2010) argue that today the children of immigrants form “the established group” in the European cities where they are born and raised and their presences and activities partake in the formation of these cities’ super-diverse characters. In these studies, the underlying tendency to use the terminology of a second-generation was related to documenting and praising the intergenerational mobility achieved by the children of immigrants. Hence applications of the second generation concept have not always favoured a rupture between the parents and their children.

The current study aims to explore youth transitions as processes rather than outcomes, without setting a condition of integration or measure of success to which children are expected to comply (Waldinger, 2003). Hence, it will not take the second-generation concept as a measure of success or integration, but will try to be conscious of the conditions of a particular cohort of young people, remaining mindful of their parental lineage, and examining whether they can be said to share a similar social, economic and political milieu. This is why the preferred term to identify this group in this study will be “native-born descendants of immigrants from Turkey”.

#### **4. Conceptual Tools of the Study**

The current study explores youth transitions as a form of practice as well as an ongoing process. The study will scrutinize both the institutional structures that shape these transitions, such as education systems, and the labour market and social structures, such as social class and gender. The study will also pay attention

to how individuals relate and react to these structural conditions during their transitions.

Bourdieu's theoretical framework provides crucial tools to understand youth transitions as a practice and to uncover the way structural mechanisms operate during transition processes without ignoring the role of agency. Similar concerns have been evident among youth sociologists as they have tried to overcome the tension between structure and agency in understanding transitions (Evans, 2002, Furlong, 1998). One solution Evans and Furlong (1996) proposed was to understand that the individual aspirations and motivations that shape transition trajectories are structured by the institutional and social structures that surround young people's lives. The concepts of "structured individualization" and "bounded agency" thus evolved from the concern to account for how structures restrain agency, though it remained limited explaining only how structures shaped the motivations of young people (ibid). On the other hand, using Bourdieu's theoretical framework and key concepts of habitus, capital and fields, Lehmann (2004) compared youth transitions in Germany and Canada and was able to show both the intertwined nature of structure and agency in shaping not only motivations but understanding the practices leading to either social reproduction or social transformation (Lehmann, 2004, Lehmann, 2007).

The current study will utilize some of Bourdieu's concepts in understanding youth transitions. First, in understanding the social class background of the descendants of immigrants from Turkey, the different forms of capital and resources they possess in relation to different fields will be explored. The role of gender is scrutinized, not only as a form of capital, but also as a social structure shaping youth transitions. Finally, Bourdieu's concept of social trajectories will be utilized to study the dynamic aspect of transitions and how individuals experience their transitions. Even though the concept of social trajectory is often perceived to be static or predetermined, it should be seen as a dynamic concept that introduces the possibility of change in the transitions of young people.

#### 4.1. Social Class: Forms of Capital and Fields

One of the most commonly employed ways to understand and define social class is by looking at employment or occupational status (Crompton, 2010). Most studies of educational achievement among the descendants of immigrants use variables that combine occupational status with educational level to control for parental background (Heath and Brinbaum, 2007). Other studies take into account parental resources to explain their role in educational attainment (Crul et al., 2012, Schnell, 2012, Van De Werfhorst and Van Tubergen, 2007). These studies repeatedly scrutinize and affirm the role of parental background and involvement in educational attainment. Some have found that, when controlling for parental background, the descendants of immigrants actually appear more likely to succeed

compared to those with native-born parents (Brinbaum and Kieffer, 2009, Van De Werfhorst and Van Tubergen, 2007). Van de Werfhorst and Van Tubergen (2007) suggest that this might be due either to a different understanding of class position of the immigrant parents or a skewed distribution of parental education. Brinbaum and Kieffer (2009) have shown that French immigrant parents had higher aspirations for their kids compared to native-born parents with similar educational and occupational backgrounds. The findings of these studies underline that, despite apparent similarities in education and economic status, there are covert mechanisms or resources that differentiate immigrant parents both from each other and from native-born parents, and these are significant in understanding the educational achievement of their descendants.

Thus, in educational research, the role of the parents has been demonstrated beyond doubt as highlighting the covert ways in which parental social class make a difference. However, in youth transitions research, labouring under the spell of the individualization paradigm, there is still a need to explore *how* parental social class influences transition processes. This is not to say social class as a significant social structure is ignored in youth transitions, but to highlight that its effect on the lives of young people during transition needs more elaboration.

To capture these covert mechanisms of social class in young people's lives, the current study will apply a more detailed class analysis. Savage, Warde and Devine (Savage et al., 2005) propose that concepts such as capital, assets and resources (CARs)—and especially Bourdieu's approach to forms of capital—might enable a better understanding of how class inequalities are formed on a micro level. This approach to understanding social class is conducive in exploring how social class works in practice rather than constructing a mere classification scheme. Savage et al. argue that Bourdieu's approach provides a dynamic understanding of class through the potential for the accumulation or transformation of the different forms of capital.

According to Bourdieu, social class is a social space in which the agents are distributed according to their relative capital and have the chance to share a similar habitus (Bourdieu, 1985b, Bourdieu, 1987). Bourdieu proposes four generic forms of capital; cultural, economic, social and symbolic (Bourdieu, 1985a). The forms of capital are not fixed, and convertibility is an important aspect of Bourdieu's theory; they are open to development over social trajectories and are convertible into each other. Capital is both material and non-material resources that individuals are endowed with for their struggle in the fields (Bourdieu, 1985a). It is thus important to establish the relation between the fields and the capital that are bestowed their symbolic value by the fields.

The field is “a field of forces and struggles in which the stake is the power to transform the field of forces” (Bourdieu, 2005)(p. 44). In each field, there is a



struggle between “the newcomer who tries to break through the barrier and the dominant agent who will try to defend the monopoly and keep out the competition” (p. 72). These conditions apply to all fields, including the fields of politics, religion, education, and employment. The descendants of immigrants are newcomers to many fields, where the rules of game are already set. They must therefore learn to play those games but also transform the fields themselves by their very presence within them.

When we try to understand the complexity of youth transitions today, we are in fact acknowledging the many fields across which they take place. Bourdieu himself has warned about the complexity of interrelations between different fields (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) (p. 109). He does not propose a general theory of relations between fields but rather a specific (historical) analysis of fields intersecting, intertwining and encompassing one another. During transition, young people often stand at the intersection of various fields; education, employment, welfare, and marriage. All these fields are strongly interrelated; for example, the field of education conditions the future divisions in the employment field, and the employment field preconditions the rules of the game in the education field. Moreover, the comparative nature of the study requires that the interrelation of these fields be analysed across different settings. This comparison will accentuate the idiosyncrasies of and struggles within each field as we explore the features and governing logics of each in different national and city settings.

This study will thus not restrict itself to a study of one field, but will rather consider the concept of a field as a way to better understand structures. Starting from the concept of a field, each chapter will commence with a detailed analysis of the local institutional and contextual structures with the aim of outlining the rules of the game and the struggles in each. I will then explore how these structures condition and influence young people’s perceptions, strategies and choices as creative agents.

This study will therefore consider social class not as a fixed status but rather as a reflection of the dynamic relations between different forms of capital. According to Bourdieu these are open to development in time and throughout the social trajectories and they are also convertible to each other (Bourdieu, 1984, Bourdieu, 1985a). The study will explore the forms of capital that both the immigrant parents and their descendants have recourse to, accumulate and convert and observe how they are instrumental in youth transitions.

However, Bourdieu’s theoretical framework cannot simply be taken for granted, especially when theorizing the social class of native-born descendants of immigrants from Turkey.<sup>5</sup> One major critique of Bourdieu’s concepts has been that

---

<sup>5</sup> The concepts I will most utilize are the different forms and volumes of capital (Bourdieu; 1984; 1985; 1987) and the concept of “social trajectory”, which Bourdieu introduces in *Distinction* (Bourdieu 1984). Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) warn against the fragmentary usage of Bourdieu’s concepts, and I am aware that Bourdieu is

they were strictly middle-class-specific as they intended to elucidate the reproduction strategies of middle classes rather than for example to explicate the social mobility patterns of dominant groups. Bourdieu was also criticized for ignoring different forms of capital and values embedded in other-than-middle class groups such as working class (Adkins, 2003, Skeggs, 2004c, Skeggs, 2004b). McRobbie, for example, has argued that Bourdieu's focus on dominated groups and their suffering in *Weight of the World* was more an elaborate empirical description of their condition than a theoretical explication of their reproduction or mobility patterns (McRobbie, 2002). Skeggs argues that this stems from Bourdieu's entrapment in the "dominant symbolic", which is defined and dominated by middle class values (Skeggs, 2004c). Nevertheless, McRobbie's critique of Bourdieu for falling short of showing the complicated nature of capital for different groups is crucial, especially when studying descendants of immigrants. I would argue that, while a certain association between fields and different forms of capital is always essential to understand what kind of capital is instrumental to young people during the practice of transitions, one should also remain open to other forms of capital which are not necessarily middle-class-specific but still have a value.

### 4.2. Gendered Transitions

Another crucial component in studying youth transitions is the gendered trajectories that young people pursue. Gender and gender roles are a crucial dynamic structuring young people's transition trajectories with regards to their education, occupations and matrimonial strategies (Gaskell, 1992). During the post-war period in which the manufacturing industry boomed, gender roles are assumed to have strongly influenced the transition pathways taken by men and women, with men working outside the home as breadwinners and women working in the household. However, while this is mostly true in the case of middle class women, for whom husbands were financially able to provide, working class women have always worked in addition to carrying responsibility for household tasks. Clearly, these conditions have transformed over the last decades, especially with women's mass entry into education and the labour market. However, these developments lead to women being active both in the labour market and at home, where they remain the main caregiver (Hochschild, 1989)

These changes are reflected not only in objective trends but also in the subjective orientations of young people and in the pathways they follow from school to work (Weis, 1990). Weis (1990) argued that more and more young women were motivated to access higher education and enter the labour market rather than

---

the "relational" sociologist and all of his concepts make sense in relation to one another. Thus, I will address forms of capital in relation to fields, and when I discuss social trajectories, I will take into account how they are bound up with young people's initial forms of capital and habitus. However, I will also remain open and critical towards the concepts relative to the findings of the study, and I believe this would not go against Bourdieu's basic premises.

becoming homemakers. However, Lehmann's study showed that, while young women aspired to further study and work, future domestic roles or maternal responsibilities were part of their motivations. These young women were concerned to talk about how to combine being a mother and a business woman, while young men did not raise any concerns with regards to marriage or parental roles when talking about their transitions (Lehmann, 2007). For other young women who were not able to establish themselves in education or in labour market, becoming mothers, pursuing domestic roles, and resorting to part-time employment continued to be valid transition pathways (Wallace, 1987).

With regards to gendered professions, with the disappearance of manual jobs, the majority of low-skilled men are doomed to work in unskilled service jobs, for which they now have to compete with women. In a recent study, (McDowell, 2009) has shown that many employers prefer young women to young men for low-skilled service jobs because they think women are more suited.

Finally, researchers have also documented specifically gendered forms of capital as playing a role during youth transitions. Feminist sociologists like Beverly Skeggs (Skeggs, 2004a, Skeggs, 2004b) have uncovered different forms of gendered capital and values through research with working class women, including loyalty and caring. These findings introduce new forms of capital, resources and values in relation to Bourdieu's middle-class-oriented fields. Reay identifies an "emotional capital" among mothers and its significance for the educational attainment of their children (Reay, 2004). This study understands that such gendered forms of capital and values are a crucial resource for young people's transitions, and it explores the different forms of capital that could be possessed or developed by immigrant mothers and fathers.

#### 4.3. Trajectories of Transitions

Finally, the significance of Bourdieu's concept of a "social trajectory" for understanding youth transitions should be highlighted. In *Distinction* Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1984) discusses the concept of social trajectory, he posits that:

On the one hand, agents are not completely defined by the properties they possess at a given time, whose conditions of acquisition persist in the habitus (the hysteresis effect); and on the other hand, the relationship between initial capital and present capital, or, to put it in another way, between the initial and present positions in social space, is a statistical relationship of very variable intensity. (p. 109)

In this definition, Bourdieu suggests that individuals travel a trajectory which might modify their initial capital over time. Nevertheless, he argues that the pathways available and the trajectory travelled will depend on the initial social position. Hence, the slope of the trajectory will be determined by parental resources and

position in social space, and the capital available at the end of the trajectory will strongly correlate with the initial capital of the parents. Clearly, young people do not move “randomly” in social space. Their trajectories are structured by the institutional setting and the contextual factors, as well as their parents’ resources. In fact, this study hypothesizes that parents play a significant role in shaping transitions not only at the beginning but also throughout the trajectories. Nevertheless, as Bourdieu later argued in *Weight of the World* (Bourdieu, 1999), education systems today work as major markers of success and are able to modify the chances of students to a great extent. Hence, trajectory should not be understood as limited by parental background, and each structure will have its own ways of shaping trajectories. In relation to these diverse structures, young people can develop different forms of capital which may or may not facilitate their greater distance from their parents’ initial position in social space. It is thus important to see what kind of roles the resources and capital of parents play in these given institutional settings; can they mitigate the effect of the trajectories?

As mentioned at the outset, Bourdieu’s concept of social trajectory was also popular in youth transition studies in the 1980s, but has recently become disparaged for having structuralist connotations. This study returns to the concept primarily due to its emphasis on the retrospective nature of transitions. Even though young people navigate their own transitions, their transitions are still bound by institutional structures. In the Netherlands, the education system tracks young people into different school streams at the age of twelve, and that in France at age 15. While the aspirations of the students certainly matter, they find themselves already at a young age in distinct trajectories that shape their transitions.

Another oft-repeated critique of Bourdieu is that he is a theorist of reproduction rather than change and transformation (Jenkins, 2002), despite Bourdieu himself openly stating that his theory is not against social transformation and that “habitus is not the fate that some people read into” (p.133). However having said that, he underlines that individuals will be likely to conform to their initial conditions of existence (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). This study will pursue a flexible and reflexive application to Bourdieu’s conceptual toolkit, while on the hand using his concepts of capital and fields to underscore the relation between two, the concept of trajectories will also be made use of to highlight how not all trajectories travelled by the descendants of immigrants finally reproduce their initial conditions. This is because an understanding social trajectories is crucial to understanding the transitions of the descendants of immigrants without limiting them to their parents’ resources or to institutional conditions alone, but acknowledging how they are developing certain forms and volumes of capital throughout their education and labour market trajectories.