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

Keskiner, E.

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3: Methodology

1. Aims of the Study and Research Questions

1.1. Aims of the Study

The aims of the current study are threefold: the first is to explore and understand transition patterns among native-born young people with immigrant parents from Turkey living in Amsterdam and Strasbourg. The second is to compare the role of distinct institutional and contextual structures across the two settings. The third is to contribute to the theoretical debate around the role of social class versus individualization in youth transition experience.

For the comparative aspect of the study, two distinct cities have been selected; Amsterdam and Strasbourg, in the Netherlands and France respectively. The two cities invite comparison on various structural aspects, as is discussed below, and both cities host large communities of Turkish immigrants who share a similar migration history. However, this is not equivalent to comparing the “same” group across “different” settings and I track the extent to which the groups have transformed in response to their distinct places of settlement.

The study combines both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide different perspectives on the issues raised. In the quantitative study, in addition to the native-born descendants of immigrants from Turkey, a comparison group with native-born parents are also included. However the qualitative study only focuses on the native-born descendants of immigrants from Turkey sample from the TIES survey respondents.

1.2. Research Questions

My research is driven by three central research questions, all exploratory and comparative in nature.

The first and overarching research question is as follows:

What kind of youth transitions do the native-born descendants of immigrants from Turkey

experience in Amsterdam and in Strasbourg? How does the nature of their transitions compare across the settings?

In order to answer this question, the study will pursue a retrospective approach, tracing the young people's experience back to their initial stratification in secondary education. It will map the young people's educational trajectories and work-study combinations, and then analyze the pattern of early labour market careers using latent class analysis, an exploratory and descriptive quantitative method. The quantitative findings will then be deepened and amplified through qualitative interviews with the young people, providing retrospective information on their family background, education, careers, aspirations and motivations.

Questions two and three help to answer question one by exploring detailed aspects of youth transition among the target group. The second research question is as follows:

How is the transition experience of native-born descendants of immigrants from Turkey shaped by institutional and contextual structures in Amsterdam and Strasbourg? How does this influence compare across settings?

This question benefits from a cross-country comparative study to explore how young people's transition experience is affected by institutional structures and contextual factors. Such factors include both macro-institutional structures, such as education systems, labour market and welfare legislations, and local economic factors, such as the conditions of and opportunities for employment in Strasbourg and Amsterdam. Each chapter begins with an analysis of the institutional and contextual structures that influence a given period of transition. Reviewing the previous literature, the study explores the similar or distinct patterns of institutional and contextual influence in the two settings.

The third research question is as follows;

How do native-born descendants of immigrants from Turkey reflect on their transition experiences? What strategies do they develop in the course of their individual trajectories? What role can be attributed to social factors such as parental resources and gender roles?

This question aims to compare the extent to which young people's transitions are affected by social structures, such as social class and gender, in addition to their individual motivations and aspirations. The primary focus will be to uncover the role, if any, of social class in youth transition trajectories. Social class is here understood as operating via the varying forms of capital made available to the descendants of immigrants by parents, extended family or significant others. The key question is thus how much young people may rely on their family and its resources in dealing with transitions, or can be said to experience more individualized transitions, where they have to navigate their own biographies. Here

the comparative focus is crucial; do distinct settings lead to distinct resources, or do different structures value and necessitate varying resources or forms of capital? The study assesses the different forms of capital and dispositions that young people develop in response to social structures and/or throughout their trajectories. Young people's trajectories are also gendered. On the one hand, the study will scrutinize the influence of gender roles in young people's decisions, other hand it will explore whether gender also operates as a form of capital, especially among immigrant mothers assisting their children's youth transitions. The answers to this question will mostly draw on the qualitative material gathered from the interviews, as it provides greater detail.

2. Case Selection and Comparative Aspect

My selection of the Netherlands and France as cases for comparison was based on the distinctness of these two settings in relation to the conditions of youth transitions. Though the study actually focuses on a micro, city-level comparison between Amsterdam and Strasbourg, some of the structural differences most significant for the youth transitions of the descendants of immigrants actually reside at the macro, national level. This is confirmed by Devadason (Devadason, 2008), who compared the perceptions of young people across two cities, Bristol (UK) and Gotenburg (Sweden), concluding that structural differences at the city level became more meaningful at a macro institutional level. In fact, any analysis of how qualifications relate to labour market outcomes during transition refers more to country-level differences, since education systems are often centralized, as they are in both the Netherlands and the France (Kerckhoff, 1995). My comparative selection of the cases was thus *primarily* based on the different ways in which the Dutch and French education systems prepare young people for the labour market. As discussed in chapter one, for the descendants of immigrants, who might be unable to rely on their parents for contacts or opportunities, education remains the most crucial route to building certain forms of capital.

Despite the differences in educational and labour market requirements in the Netherlands and France, Walther (2006, p.128) groups the countries in the same category on the grounds of educational selection, stating that; "school is organized more selectively to allocate the younger generation occupational careers and social positions in different segments". However, though a similar logic of educational stratification is found in both countries, the way in which this logic is put into practice is very different, particularly in terms of the different levels of educational stratification, and the recognition of qualifications in the labour market, especially those from vocational education.

The Dutch education system is marked by early stratification, and students are streamed into different educational tracks at the age of twelve. French education is more comprehensive, with tracking occurring later, at the end of lower secondary

education, when young people are fifteen. Previous studies have argued that early selection has negative consequences for the descendants of immigrants, since they are more likely to be streamed into vocational tracks in such systems and their chances of entering academic tracks increases as they get older (Crul et al., 2012). These stratification processes set the conditions for youth transitions, and are crucial in determining the trajectories that young people can follow into higher education and the labour market (Bol and Van De Werfhorst, 2012).

Early stratification also defines different pathways into higher education in the Netherlands and France (Allmendinger, 1989). Generally, while students in academic tracks gain direct access to higher education, students in vocational training have to stay longer in school and pursue an indirect route into higher education. However, access to higher education from the academic secondary education track varies across settings. In the Netherlands, the pathways from upper secondary education into higher education are clearly defined; the general academic track leads to tertiary vocational colleges, the scientific academic track leads to universities, and the lower vocational tracks lead to senior or middle vocational training. These pathways are ranked against each other, and the track leading to university is deemed most prestigious. However, there are hardly any prestige differences between schools that offer academic or vocational tracks (Allen et al., 2007). In contrast, in France the selection mechanisms are more complex; while students who gain a *baccalauréat* diploma could access any higher education institute, there are strong prestige differences between the streams within lyceums and universities (Brinbaum and Kieffer, 2009, Duru-Bellat and Kieffer, 2008). For instance, prestigious universities often require additional preparation and exams.

Another major difference between two settings is how the skills gained through education are rewarded in the labour market. The Dutch education system provides vocational training at school, accompanied by extended periods of internships. However, in France, school-based vocational education requires only meagre employment experience, the alternative being the apprenticeship program, which is deemed less prestigious, and is hence less popular among young people. Maurice and Sellier (Maurice, 1986) have characterized the French labour market as an “occupational space” where skills are gained through on-the-job training, rather than at school or through internships. Hence, vocational graduates (especially those with a BEP diploma) have more trouble finding jobs in France. However, this lack of skill specification also creates a form of flexibility that young people can exploit to work in jobs outside their area of training (Mueller and Gangl, 2003). The Netherlands, by contrast, more closely resembles the strict “qualification space” in Germany, where the skills gained through training in school and in internships are tightly coupled to employers' and labour market expectations (Iannelli and Raffè, 2007). In such systems, vocational graduates have some advantage since they gain smoother access to labour market. However, strong coupling leads to less flexibility

and more insecurity for those who take work outside their field of study, and for those who lack vocational diplomas. An additional structural mechanism at the macro, national level, one crucial to transition among the descendants of immigrants, is the omnipresence of student employment in the Netherlands, which is in stark contrast to France.

Next, at the micro, city level, my primary motivation in studying Amsterdam and Strasbourg was the existence in each of a substantial group of immigrants from Turkey and their descendants. Strasbourg is home to a considerable Turkish population, who are even more visible than the immigrants from the Maghreb—the origin of the majority of immigrant communities in France's other major cities (Kirszbaum et al., 2009)—and there are almost 30,000 Turkish immigrants and their descendants in the Alsace region (Morel-Chevillet, 2005.). In Amsterdam, the Turkish community is around 40,000 strong (O+S, 2012). Additionally, most of the immigrants to both cities arrived via guest worker migration flows, and, as a result, both these descendants of immigrants are predominantly the descendants of guest workers (Bocker, 2000, Danis and Irtis, 2008). Also, in both cities, the majority of Turkish immigrants and their descendants live in large suburban districts with social housing. In terms of residential distribution, in Amsterdam the majority live in the west and east, and a large portion of the group lives in social housing complex (Musterd and Deurloo, 2008). In Strasbourg, the majority are concentrated, along with other immigrant groups, in the *quartiers* such as Mulhouse or Hautepierre (Brabant, 1989).

However the cities do differ from each other with respect to their labour market structures and the impact of macro-economic trends. Clearly, over the last decade, including the period in which this research was conducted, the economy of the Netherlands was in a better condition than that of France. Nevertheless, Alsace forms one of France's most economically vibrant regions, boasting relatively low youth unemployment rates (16%), though these are still higher compared to Amsterdam (7%). Amsterdam's economy is dominated by the service sector and a growing financial sector, and other major sectors are health care, ICT and knowledge. While Strasbourg also has a strong service sector, the traditional manufacturing industry is contracting across the Alsace region. Nevertheless, factories do still offer jobs to most workers in the region, and may be significant in creating employment for descendants of immigrants (Morel-Chevillet, 2005.).

This study therefore intends to contribute to the debate on the changing nature of youth transitions (du Bois-Reymond, 2009b, Evans, 2002, Furlong, 2009, Walther et al., 2006). These changes are due to the disappearance of industrial economies and the rising importance of the post-industrial service economy, with its increased need for credentials, less stable jobs and alternative forms of employment. The comparison of these two cities—one classified as a strong service economy and the other as a declining industrial economy increasingly dependent on services—

enables an exploration of whether the persistence of industrial forms of employment influences youth transitions. For instance, one might expect young people in Strasbourg, especially those who work in industries, to pursue more traditional transitions compared to those in Amsterdam.

To conclude, the selection of my case studies was primarily driven by the distinct structural conditions shaping youth transitions in each setting (King et al., 1994).

3. Collection of the Data and Research Techniques

3.1. Mixed Methodology

In order to answer the main research questions, I used a mixed methods design, relying on both quantitative and qualitative methods (Creswell, 2003, Niglas, 2009). My choice of mixed methods was driven by two motivations: first, the need to explore the broad patterns of transitions across two settings, for which I have relied on quantitative analysis; second, the aim to understand in detail the individual trajectories of my respondents within such transition patterns, for which I used in-depth qualitative methods.

While combining methods has a long tradition in sociology, most recently under the rubric of “mixed methodology”, there is much debate around the different techniques for merging quantitative and qualitative methods (Creswell, 2003, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, Niglas, 2009). The design of mixed-method studies varies based on the timing of data collection as well as the moment combination of data (Niglas, 2009). Creswell has also clustered mixed method designs based on whether one method is dominant compared to the other, or whether they focus on the same subjects, or on different, complementary ones (Creswell, 2003). The present study has made a systematic use of the two methods, quantitative and qualitative, whereby both methodologies informed each other continuously.

In the present study, the quantitative data selection was primarily structured by the available resources. This study has taken place within the scope of a larger project called the “The Integration of European Second Generation (TIES)”. The TIES project was launched on September 2007, and aimed to conduct an international survey (the TIES Survey) on the children of Turkish, Moroccan and Ex-Yugoslavian Immigrants living in 15 European Cities in eight countries. (Crul and Heering, 2008). The TIES survey was initiated to compare the role of distinct “integration contexts” in explaining the trajectories of children of immigrants from Turkey, Morocco and ex-Yugoslavia, and to explore whether they achieved parity with their peers with native-born parents (Crul et al., 2012). The TIES survey is a very comprehensive study, providing detailed retrospective information on the educational trajectory, school to work transition, and labour market attainment of the respondents. It also details their household composition, parental background,

neighbourhood configuration, citizenship status and identity, using a standardized survey across the eight countries. With access to such a comprehensive data set, I could carry out a secondary data analysis of the TIES survey to describe general transition patterns in my chosen sample.

Nevertheless, the TIES questionnaire is designed as a general survey to explore the relative social position of the native-born descendants of immigrants in different countries, rather than a specific inquiry to assess transition patterns. It thus leaves unasked many questions relevant to a detailed analysis of the transition process, such as those about respondents' motivations for choosing their current course of study, or their reasons for changing between different statuses. Therefore, the survey was supplemented with qualitative data to provide more retrospective and subjective information about how the young people's transitions evolved, the role their families played (if any), the coping methods and strategies they used, and how their motivations and aspirations might relate to their future orientations.

In-depth interviews remain one of the most common forms of qualitative data collection, yet there are several perspectives with respect to what the data can legitimately provide (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Here I side with the approach that claims the researcher “travels” with the interviewee, to borrow Kvale’s term, in the construction of their stories (Kvale, 1996). The probing by the interviewer provokes the interviewee to self reflection and an attempt to uncover the depths of their experiences. Bourdieu, however, warns against the “biographical illusion”, especially when created in an interview environment where the interviewees feel forced to put their lives in perspective and present them in organized sequences (Bourdieu, 2000). Nevertheless, a biographical approach in in-depth interviews encourages respondents to reflect on their earlier experiences, and remains an essential method for collecting retrospective qualitative data. Therefore, in the interviews for the present study, I asked respondents to walk me through their experiences in and out of school, the stories of their parents and the role they felt they played in their education. These in-depth, biographical interviews enabled respondents to carefully consider and voice how they perceived their transitions.

To summarize, a mixed methodological approach has been applied through out the research process. During the exploratory and analysis phases, the results of both the quantitative and qualitative data informed, supplemented and strengthened each other. Finally, each of my chapters is structured around a mixed-method design, reporting the results of both quantitative and qualitative methods in a mutually complementary way.

3.2. Quantitative Section: Secondary Analysis of the TIES Survey

The quantitative aspect of the research began with a preliminary analysis of the TIES data set, which further informed both my sampling decisions and the case selection for the qualitative fieldwork.

The TIES data provided information for two cities in both target countries; Amsterdam and Rotterdam in the Netherlands, and Paris and Strasbourg in France. In each city, around 250 respondents were targeted to be interviewed from each category (see Appendix I). This is a relatively small sample (although quite large in city terms), but is substantial enough to develop a coherent approach in combination with the qualitative findings from the same cities. A review of the literature suggested that Strasbourg formed a better comparison to Amsterdam than Paris in terms of the sizes of the cities and the population magnitude. The quantitative analysis of the TIES data also suggested that Turkish families in Amsterdam and Strasbourg illustrated similar migration histories and educational backgrounds.

Table 1: Respondents' mean age, and gender and city distribution

	Amsterdam				Strasbourg			
	Native-Born Descendants of Immigrants from Turkey		Comparison Group		Native-Born Descendants of Immigrants from Turkey		Comparison Group	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
%	46%	54%	48%	52%	38.5%	61.5%	45.8%	54.2%
Mean Age	24.6	24.4	27.6	27.5	24.3	24.6	25.4	26.7
St. Dev.	4.5	4.1	4.5	4.5	4.6	4.8	5.3	5.3
N	109	128	123	136	97	155	81	96
Total	237		259		252		177	

Source: TIES Survey 2008

The TIES survey defines second generation as the children of Turkish, Moroccan and Ex-Yugoslavian immigrants who were born and raised in the host countries. The age of respondents ranged from 18 to 35 and they had at least one parent born in one of the countries of migration mentioned above. The comparison group was composed of children of native-born parents living in similar neighborhoods in the same cities and in the same age range. In the quantitative analysis both the native-born descendants of immigrants from Turkey and the comparison group was included in my analysis to illustrate the transition trends for all the young people who participated in the survey. The comparison group was thus utilized as a proxy to illustrate the general trends in the given cities. I was also able to compare and contrast the trends, not only across cities, but also among young people.

The TIES data also provides detailed retrospective information with respect to the educational careers of the respondents. In this sense it is a unique data set that

helps to reconstruct the entire educational trajectory of young people. Since the TIES survey was conducted with young people between 18 and 35 years old, some participants were continuing their education at the time of the study.

For the present study, the education section of the TIES survey was analysed to describe the distinct educational trajectories that the respondents are streamed into before or during secondary education. Throughout these trajectories, young people also begin to combine work and study activities, and the trends of student employment are also be mapped using the TIES Survey.

Table 2: Activity at the time of the Survey, in% and N

	Amsterdam				Strasbourg			
	Native Born Descendants of Immigrants from Turkey		Comparison Group		Native Born Descendants of Immigrants from Turkey		Comparison Group	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Still in School	88	37%	76	29%	76	30%	61	34%
Working	90	38%	167	65%	119	47%	89	50%
Unemployed	25	10%	5	2%	31	12%	21	12%
Other	34	15%	11	4%	26	10%	6	3%
Total (N)	237	100%	259	100%	252	100%	177	100%

Source: TIES Survey 2008

The TIES data is also rich in terms of respondents' employment experience, though this data is not as longitudinal as in education section. If the respondents were economically active at the time of the interview, we have very detailed information on their employment, and if their current job was not their first, then we also have information on their first job. The study also recorded how many part-time or full-time jobs our respondents had between the first and current job. For those who were inactive at the time of the interview, we have detailed information on their last jobs, and if their last job was not their first job then there is information on their first job and the number of part-time/ or full-time jobs they had in between. The TIES data set does provide very detailed information about young people's current or last job, including duration of employment, type of contract, and promotion, as well as detailed information on the number of job changes, and the duration of any unemployment. Subjective questions gauged career satisfaction as well as plans for the future. There is also a brief section on school to work transition, in which the survey recorded the number of months it

took respondents to find their first job after leaving school, and the activities conducted during the period. Therefore, a typology based on different transition outcomes was developed. Previous studies in the field have identified various transition pathways, ranging from smooth transitions to going beyond the institutionally predicted pathways, including shifting between different statuses or falling into unemployment and stagnation (Bradley and Devadason, 2008, Evans and Heinz, 1994, Plug and Bois-Reymond, 2006). In order to explore all the different forms of transition, the present study has focused on respondents' trajectories up until the moment of the interview, rather than only until their first job. This is because their first job could be a student job, indicating little about eventual career or excluding those who never secure a first job. Finally, the study compares transition patterns across settings and relates them to earlier educational experience, social class, age, and gender.

3.3. Qualitative Interviews

The qualitative aspect of the study was conducted as follow-up interviews with the TIES survey respondents. Majority of the native-born descendants of Turkish immigrants agreed to be approached again: in Amsterdam, 85% and in Strasbourg 73%. From among those who agreed to be re-contacted, a sample of 50 in each city was drawn. However, not all the people in the sample could be contacted, and ultimately only 25 interviews were conducted in each city. For details of the fieldwork visits please see the appendix on qualitative data collection.

In selecting the sample, the snowballing method was unnecessary, as the TIES database already provided a rich and miscellaneous range of respondents to choose from. I initially pursued a purposeful sampling strategy, and only selected the descendants of two Turkish immigrant parents. Additionally, while the TIES survey targeted young people between 18-35, I limited my sample to those between 20 and 30 years old at the time of the interviews. As I have argued in the theory chapter with respect to generations, this was due to my concern to capture a cohort whose transitions shared a certain social and economic milieu. I also sought a comparable distribution in educational attainment, interviewing those with both academic and vocational training. In my chosen age range, there were young people either at the end of their studies, be it higher education or vocational training, or had already left school. Among those who had left school, I interviewed a range of unemployed, inactive, and active respondents. The variance in the sample shows the multiplicity of transition experience for an age cohort of 20 to 30 years old. Despite the stability achieved by some respondents, it is difficult to describe any of the respondents as being in the final stage of their transitions, and their careers remained open to development. As a result, the design of the qualitative inquiry also aimed to capture transition as a *process* rather than an outcome. A detailed description of the profiles of my interviewees is provided in the appendix for qualitative data collection.

I made two field visits in both settings and conducted interviews with 25 interviewees per setting. During the second stage of the fieldwork, I refined my purposeful sampling strategy to achieve a balance in my sample. During my second fieldwork visit, I tried to re-contact some of my respondents from the first round to see how their transitions had evolved over the year. Some had changed their contact details or addresses, but I was able to re-contact six respondents in Amsterdam and five in Strasbourg. The second round of interviews produced interesting results, underlining the longitudinal and ongoing nature of transitions. Further details regarding the qualitative fieldwork experience can be found in the Appendix II .

The interviews were conducted mostly in Turkish, though it was up to the interviewees to decide the language of the interview. Most interviews were conducted using both languages and only one interview was mostly in Dutch. All the respondents had high proficiency in Turkish, including the two ‘Kurdish’ respondents who also preferred to “practice” their Turkish during the interviews. All the interviews were transcribed and analysed using Atlasti software. Although a detailed coding of the data set was attempted, the analysis has ultimately relied more on the family of codes, or on a conceptual organization of the transcripts, since detailed coding tended to de-contextualize the quotations from the flow of the interview.