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

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4: Before Transition:
The Story of Immigrant Parents

Any study of migratory phenomena that overlooks the emigrants’ conditions of origin is bound only to give a view that is at once partial and ethnocentric.

Abdelmayek Sayad, The Suffering of the Immigrant p. 29.

1. Introduction

The respondents in this study are, like the majority of descendants of Turkish immigrants in Amsterdam and Strasbourg, the children or grandchildren of guest-worker immigration flows. Their families thus share similar migration histories, as well as comparable conditions of departure from Turkey and arrival in the host countries. During the post-war period, over a million Turkish workers immigrated to Western Europe as a result of labour recruitment agreements. Even though these agreements were initially intended as a temporary migration scheme, only one out of three Turkish immigrants returned to their home country (Akgunduz, 2008); the majority were joined by their families in the host countries and settled permanently. Today, the bulk of communities originating from Turkey in Western Europe are the descendants of these immigrants, forming one of its largest groups, totalling approximately four million people.

This chapter aims to begin the stories of the native born descendants of immigrants with those of their parents, outlining a brief history of Turkish immigration to the Netherlands and France. It then attempts to qualitatively deconstruct the social class of respondents' parents, to show which kind of forms of capital were instrumental for young people in their distinct settings. It thus analyses the TIES survey to explore the social composition of the parents in Amsterdam and Strasbourg, including their migration history, education level, economic activity, and household composition. Finally, Bourdieu’s concept of
different forms of capital will be utilized to explore how parental resources can influence the transitions of descendants of immigrants from Turkey in Amsterdam and Strasbourg.

2. History of Post-war Turkish Immigration to France and the Netherlands

After the second World War, various Western European countries signed labour recruitment agreements with Southern European and Mediterranean countries, including Turkey, in order to fulfil the labour shortages in their own industries (Castles and Miller, 2009). The initial immigration was thus determined by labour demand in the host countries, and the immigrants were invited to work on a temporary basis, in the expectation that they would later return to their home country. Turkey signed labour recruitment agreements with Germany, France, the Netherlands, and Belgium in the 1960s, and set up employment agencies in its major cities to facilitate the migration process. Previous studies have cited the main push factors for this immigration as Turkey's high unemployment rates, low economic development, and general poverty (Abadan-Unat, 1976, Castles and Kosack, 1973). Yet, in a recent study, Akgündüz (Akgunduz, 2008) has challenged these arguments by showing that, while the unemployment levels in Turkey were indeed high, uptake among Turkish citizens was initially quiet low. The Turkish state then actively promoted these guest worker agreements, aiming to send its less-educated citizens abroad to develop their skills, and to use their remittances to invest in developing industries in Turkey (ibid). Nevertheless, according to the Turkish State Institute of Statistics (DIE) and Turkish Employment Agency Archives (IIBK) those who initially emigrated were mostly semi-skilled workers from industrial urban centres like Istanbul, Izmir, and Ankara. The Turkish government then enacted a policy to increase the recruitment pool by giving preference to underdeveloped regions and unskilled workers. In this “anonymous migration phase”, workers who had registered in local labour recruitment offices were selected anonymously (Danış and İrtiş, 2008). Provinces in central and eastern Anatolia took precedence over urban cities in western Turkey. As a result after the labour agreements expired in the 1970s, “chain migration” became more common. In this new “nominative phase” of immigration, prospective emigrants used their relatives, co-villagers (hemşeriler), or other contacts to arrange for recruitment with a foreign employer (ibid). This practice led to the formation of islands of people from the same provincial origin in the host country (Abadan-Unat, 2006, Akgunduz, 2008). Kin group migration occurred not only between Turkey and Western European countries, but also within Europe itself, as immigrants moved from one host country to another to be with their families (Akgunduz, 2008).

From the 1960s until the expiration of most labour recruitment agreements by 1974, Turkey sent 800,000 immigrants through official channels, and approximately 500,000 immigrants arrived through unofficial routes. The latter were workers who entered the host country on a tourist visa or other permit, and later legally acquired
Before Transition

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a work permit. In total, close to 1,300,000 Turkish immigrants entered Western European countries during the guest worker period (ibid.).

The second half of the 1970s and the early 1980s marked the period of Turkish immigration for family reunification purposes, as the guest workers who settled in their host country were joined by their wives and children. By 1990, the number of Turkish immigrants in Europe amounted to 2.5 million. Due to the lower labour migration among Turkish females, the majority of Turkish immigrant women entered the host countries during the family reunification period, together with younger immigrant groups (children). This was also the period in which temporary immigration developed into a permanent settlement phase, although this was acknowledged neither by the immigrants nor by the host countries (Piore, 1979). Only in the 1990s did the host countries begin to realize that they had become countries of immigration and that the immigrants were there for good (Castles and Miller, 2009). The past two decades have consequently become synonymous with the new concept of immigration control, and with policies of “integration” and “assimilation” aimed at immigrants and their descendants (Duyvendak and Scholten, 2011). While the French model was associated with republican model of integration that pursues an assimilationist approach with regards to citizenship models but also in their so-called integration policies (Brubaker, 1992), the Dutch model was labelled as multiculturalism which values the cultural pluralism of immigrant minorities (Koopmans, 2007).

It is also necessary to mention two factors related to Turkish immigration in Europe during the postwar period. First, not all guest workers who came to Europe intended to stay and a considerable number of them did return to their homeland. By the end of 1981, a total of 400,000 workers had returned to Turkey. These return rates vary among the different host countries: while one in three guest workers returned from Germany, one in four workers returned from the Netherlands (Akgunduz, 2008).

Second, the Turkish immigrant population in Western Europe has diversified in the past few decades. Asylum seekers fleeing political conflicts in Turkey also came to Europe during the 1980s and 1990s. For example, political refugees who identified as Kurdish, Assyrian and other fleeing the Turkish coup d’etat arrived in France in the late 1980s (Simon, 2003). Other, smaller groups have included students and civil servants sent abroad by the Turkish government to serve the guest worker populations, including Turkish language teachers and religious workers). However,

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6 However, a recent series of articles published in Patterns of Prejudice has shown that these national models of integration do not really match the policies or discourses of integration in either country. In France, despite the assimilationist perspective, hardly any anti-racist policies have been developed (Bertossi, 2012). In the Netherlands, studies show that multiculturalism was hardly ever present in either policies or in discourse and was hence already dead before it was born (Reekum and Duyvendak, 2012).
none of these immigration movements were able to surpass the volume of the initial labour migration flows (Abadan-Unat, 2006).

2.1. Immigration from Turkey to the Netherlands

Due to labour shortages, the Netherlands began receiving labour migrants from its former colonies in Indonesia, the Antilles, and Aruba in 1945, though the size of these migrant groups was insufficient to cover Dutch labour shortages (Vermeulen and Penninx, 2000). At the same time, the Netherlands was facing considerable emigration from its own territory, and thus began to recruit labour from southern European countries, as well as Turkey and Morocco (ibid). After Turkey signed its first bilateral labour recruitment agreement with Germany in 1961, the Netherlands and France followed suit, with the Netherlands signing a similar agreement in 1964. Migration to the Netherlands was initially small in scope, but accelerated in the following years (Akgunduz, 2008). During the recruitment period from 1964 to 1974, up to 30,000 people migrated to the Netherlands from Turkey (Dagevos et al., 2006). Most of these Turkish immigrants came from central and eastern regions in Anatolia (Akgunduz, 2008). After 1974, the Netherlands ended its recruitment agreements, but Turkish migration continued through unofficial channels or through family reunification. The largest number of family reunifications took place in the 1980s, during which the Turkish population in the Netherlands almost doubled. Since the mid-1990s, Turkish immigration to the Netherlands has remained low and stable. Nevertheless, around 4,000 to 5,000 young Turks continue to emigrate annually; some for study or work, but primarily for marriage purposes (Nicolaas, 2010). Today, CBS statistics record the Turkish community in the Netherlands as 388,967 people (CBS, 2012); 51% were born in the Netherlands while 49% were born in Turkey (ibid).

Most immigrants from Turkey settled in the large cities of western Holland such as Rotterdam or Amsterdam (Bocker, 2000). Like most guest workers, the majority of the Turkish workers were employed in low-skilled jobs in the manufacturing sector. In Amsterdam, most were employed in factories like Ford or ADM (Rath, 2002). Over time, economic conditions led to the closure of these plants and the workers decamped to other industries. Self-employed entrepreneurship also became popular among Turkish immigrants. In Amsterdam, Turks formed the largest group of ethnic entrepreneurs during the 1990s, and they were active in the catering, retail, wholesale, and manufacturing trades (ibid). Indeed, Turkish migrants were the only immigrant group active in manufacturing industries; in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the garment industry in Amsterdam was taken over by Turkish entrepreneurs, relying on co-ethnic workers and informal employment practices. This was tolerated by the Dutch authorities for the sake of the positive effect it had on the economic growth (Raes et al., 2002). However, as markets emerged over time in Eastern Europe and Turkey, the demand for these Turkish-owned businesses diminished. Increased labour sanctions by the Dutch government
followed (ibid), and most of these businesses were closed down. Today, Turkish immigrants and their descendants continue to be active entrepreneurs in the catering and retail industries. However, since the 1990s, inactivity rates have increased among first generation groups, who have become either unemployed or officially disabled (CBS, 2004).

2.2. Immigration from Turkey to France

France’s long history of migration from its former colonies predates the Second World War. Even during the pre-war period, France was receiving immigration due to its demographic problems (Mayer, 1975). In the postwar period, labour migration became the French government’s preferred means of economic recovery, leading to the setting up of an administrative office to regulate guest worker immigration (Office National d’Immigration (ONI)). Though certain privileges were granted to citizens of former colonies over other immigrants, Southern European and Mediterranean countries were nonetheless included in France’s immigration schemes (Hargreaves, 1995). Following the Netherlands’ example, France and Turkey signed a labour recruitment agreement in 1965. However, in its initial form, this contract did not initiate serious immigration flows, and only after its modification in 1969 did France started receiving high numbers of immigrants from Turkey. In 1974, France cancelled its labour agreement with Turkey (Danış and İrtiş, 2008). According to Turkish Employment Agency Statistics, approximately 55,000 workers emigrated to France between 1965 and 1974 (Akgunduz, 2008). However, this number excludes those who entered France via Germany, and those who moved via unofficial routes and only became legalized later. It is worth noting that the initial labour migration flow from Turkey to France was larger than that to the Netherlands. Furthermore, despite the end of the labour agreements in 1974, Turkish migration to France persisted through private employers, family reunification, and illegal entry. By 1999, there were 208,000 people of Turkish origin in France, of whom 175,987 were first generation immigrants (Simon, 2003). According to the 2004 census, the total number, including those born in France and those with French citizenship, had increased to 370,000 (Tapia, 2008).

Turkish guest workers originally came to France to work in the manufacturing industries (Petek-Salom, 2002). After the oil crisis of 1973-1974, this group began falling into unemployment. During the 1990s, the unemployment rate among Turks in France reached 29% (Simon, 2003). While some Turks successfully transitioned to the service economy (particularly in construction and catering), the majority remained in labour-intensive industrial establishments (Hargreaves, 1995). According to INSEE records for 1999, 64% of Turks in France were employed as manual workers, while only 8% were self-employed entrepreneurs (Simon, 2003). In 2004, the proportion of Turks employed as manual workers decreased to 58%, while those in other jobs increased to 15%, and the self-employed to 9% (Perrin-
Haynes, 2008). Turkish immigrants and their descendants are dispersed throughout
the country, but are an especially visible presence in Paris, as well as in the Rhone-
Alpes and Alsace regions (Danış and İrtiş, 2008). In the Alsace region, including
Strasbourg, Turks have been mostly employed in large-scale manufacturing jobs
and in mining. Almost 80% of the Turkish men in this region work in the industrial
and construction sectors, while Turkish women are more present in the service and
administrative sectors (Morel-Chevillet, 2005.). Unemployment is a serious
problem among the Turkish community in France, who are three times more likely
to be unemployed than peers of European origin (Perrin-Haynes, 2008). The
situation is most striking among Turkish women, as they are the largest inactive
female group compared to other immigrants and their descendants in France (ibid).
Nevertheless, according to INSEE statistics for 2004-2007, nearly 90% of men of
Turkish origin between the ages of 26 and 46 are active in the labour market; 58%
of them work as labourers, and 15% as service sector employees. After the age of
54, the activity rate among men also declines (Perrin-Haynes, 2008).

3. Comparison of Respondents’ Parental Backgrounds in Amsterdam &
Strasbourg

3.1. Immigration History of Turkish Immigrant Parents

This section will outline the immigration history of Turkish parents in Amsterdam
and Strasbourg drawing on the TIES survey data.

Both Amsterdam and Strasbourg contain large communities of Turkish immigrants
and their descendants. According to the Dutch 2009 census, the size of the group
in Amsterdam is 39,654 people (Booi et al., 2009). They are the third largest
community in Amsterdam following the Surinamese and Moroccans. In 2004,
Strasbourg’s Turkish population amounted to 28,500 people (Morel-Chevillet,
2005.). Although they are a smaller group compared to the Turkish immigrants in
Amsterdam, Strasbourg hosts the second largest population of Turkish immigrants
and their descendants in France after Paris. Most of these Turkish immigrants and
their descendants live in majority-minority neighbourhoods of Amsterdam (Nell
and Rath, 2009) and Strasbourg (Western, 2007).

The TIES survey drew its samples from neighbourhoods where immigrants and
their descendants form a considerable population and respondents for the
qualitative interviews were traced from survey respondents, hence the same
neighbourhoods. The focus group of the TIES survey were born and raised in the
host country with at least one parent born in Turkey. According to the TIES data,
more than 98% of the Turkish second generation had both parents born in Turkey.
Furthermore the TIES survey asked the parents about their usual place of
residence at age 15.
A small group of Turkish parents had already arrived in the host country before the age of 15 (Table 3). These parents were classified by previous studies as the “1.5 generation”, or in-between generation, as they were born in Turkey but came to the Netherlands as children or adolescents (Bocker, 2000). Most of these parents have received some Dutch education (generally vocational), and developed a good knowledge of the host country’s language (Bocker, 2000, Simon, 2003). In fact, the qualitative interviews revealed that at least a third of respondents had mothers or fathers who arrived in the Netherlands or France before or around the age of 15. These respondents were generally either the youngest children of immigrant workers, or the children of immigrants who arrived as adolescents. The respondents thus also have parents from different generational backgrounds and cohorts.

The parents' dates of arrival in France or the Netherlands correspond strongly with the periods of open guest worker immigration to the host countries (Table 4). Most of the parents immigrated during the period when labour recruitments to France

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7 Some of these parents were also born in the Netherlands. They are not included in the 1.5 generation description.
and the Netherlands peaked between 1969 and 1975. The data also corroborates previous studies, showing that immigration flows continued after the labour agreements ended, until the 1980s, only slowing down later. In terms of parental motivation for immigration, most respondents reported that their fathers arrived in the host countries in order to work, while their mothers’ main motive was to join their families or husbands.  

In terms of place of parental origin, the TIES survey also asked the respondents their parents’ region of origin in Turkey. Most of the parents in our survey originate from central Anatolia (Fig. 1.). In Amsterdam, 62% of the Turkish group came from central Anatolia, while in Strasbourg 43% were from central Anatolia, though 18% also came from western and another 18% from northern Anatolia. The regions of origin illustrated in the TIES survey seem to overlap with the overall migration patterns to the Netherlands and France. In the Netherlands, the majority of Turkish guest workers arrived from central and eastern Anatolia (Akgündüz, 2008), while in France, the nominal migration process and invitations by private employers resulted in the arrival of workers from a wider range of regions (Danış and İrtiş, 2008, Tapia, 2008). In the qualitative interviews, most respondents in Amsterdam and Strasbourg had parents who came from central Anatolia. In Amsterdam, almost all respondents had parents from central Anatolia: Kayseri, Konya, Kirşehir, and Karaman. In Strasbourg, most respondents parents were also from Kayseri, Kirşehir, and Konya, though the parents of three respondents came from Denizli (western Anatolia), two came from Samsun, and one from Rize (both northern Anatolia).

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8 It is also important to note that not all women who arrived for family reunification came for marriage reasons, and but they also came as children or adolescents to join their parents. As a result, the family reunification figures for women also include those who came as children. The majority of these women later married someone from Turkey, hence their husbands also state family reunification as their major motivation to migrate. Even though majority of the workers were male, and women came mostly for family reunification, these assumptions should always be approached with caution.
There are similarities between the survey groups regarding the rural or urban nature of the parents’ residence at the age of 15 (Table 5); in both in Amsterdam and Strasbourg, around 50% of the parents came from rural areas and villages, while the rest came from mid-size or large cities.

The trends in migration to Amsterdam and Strasbourg outlined so far raise two points: The first is that the immigration histories of the parents in both cities demonstrate strong parallels. Except for the slight differences in the regions of origin, both groups of parents seem to have followed similar immigration patterns over the same period and from similar regions. Second, the migration trends of
both groups of parents comply with the trends of guest worker migration flows described earlier: Both groups of parents arrived in their host countries during the labour recruitment period of the 1960s and early 1970s; most of the fathers came to work while the mothers came for family reasons; and most of the immigrants came from central Anatolia and from rural areas. It is thus possible to claim that the majority of the respondents in this study are the descendants of guest workers who arrived during the 1960s and 1970s.

3.2. Age, Education, Occupational Activity and Household Composition among Respondents’ Parents

This section examines respondents’ parents’ educational qualifications, occupational activity and household composition in their respective host countries to illustrate how respondents' social backgrounds differ across settings. It draws on both the TIES data and the in-depth interviews. Since they migrated around the same time, parents had a similar age distribution as we see in Figure 2.

![Figure 2: Parents' age distribution](image)

Source: TIES Survey 2008

The majority of guest workers who migrated to Western Europe had little education (Crul and Doomernik, 2003, Simon, 2003). According to the records of employment agencies in Turkey, most (around 60%) had only a primary school certificate (Abadan-Unat, 1976, Akgündüz, 2008). In both Amsterdam and Strasbourg, mothers had a lower level of education than fathers (Fig. 3). 13.5% of the mothers in Amsterdam and 17.9% of the mothers in Strasbourg never had any
schooling, or had only attended religious school. Conversely, only 5.9% of the fathers in Amsterdam and 2.8% of the fathers in Strasbourg had no schooling at all, while more than 40% had been to primary school and 20% had attended secondary school. These trends comply with Akgündüz’s findings, and he argues that they might be caused by the deliberate recruitment of less-educated migrant labourers. Indeed, both the Dutch and French governments targeted immigrants with low skills, which accounts for the educational status of most parents. However, some parents did receive education in the host country (Fig. 3). Interestingly, a higher number of mothers received some sort of schooling in host countries; 7.6% in Amsterdam and 6.8% in Strasbourg stated that they had attended courses, ranging from primary to higher education. The qualitative interviews showed that exposure to schooling facilities in the host countries proved crucial for the children of these immigrants.

Figure 3: Parents' educational attainment

![Graph showing educational attainment by gender and location](image)

Source: TIES Survey 2008

With regards to Turkish respondents' reported a lack of literacy in Turkish of 2.5% for fathers and 11% for mothers in Amsterdam and 1% for fathers and 17% for mothers in Strasbourg. Whereas for language proficiency levels in French and Dutch among immigrant parents (Table 6), the TIES data illustrates that the fathers were more proficient than the mothers. Second language literacy rates fared the worst among Turkish immigrant mothers in Strasbourg: 47.2% could neither read
nor write in French, and only 30.6% could do both. The Dutch literacy rate of the Turkish mothers in Amsterdam was much better, with 54.4% able to both read and write and only 27.8% able to do neither. This is comparable to the French literacy rate of the Turkish fathers in Strasbourg, 49.6% of whom could both read and write and 27% of whom could do neither. In that sense, the joint literacy level of both parents in Amsterdam seems to be better than that in Strasbourg.

However, the picture for spoken language proficiency is more complex (Fig. 4). Among those who “speak well/very well,” the fathers in Strasbourg rank highest at 34.9%, followed by the fathers in Amsterdam at 24.9%, while the mothers are in a comparable position in both cities, with around 19% speaking the local language “well/very well”.

Table 6: Parents’ reading and writing proficiency in Dutch or French

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Amsterdam Father</th>
<th>Amsterdam Mother</th>
<th>Strasbourg Father</th>
<th>Strasbourg Mother</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Only read</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only write</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read and write</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>54.4%</td>
<td>49.6%</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>47.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DK/Missing</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N)</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: TIES Survey 2008

Figure 4: Parents’ spoken proficiency in Dutch or French

Among parents who speak Dutch or French “reasonably/ a little bit,” parents in Amsterdam clearly outrank the parents in Strasbourg, with, on average, over 60%
of both parents able to get by in Amsterdam against less than half in Strasbourg. However when it comes to speaking “hardly / not at all”, the mothers fare the worst, with 32.5% hardly able to speak any French, followed by 16.4% of mothers in Amsterdam.

Overall, it should be remembered that this data was provided by the respondents rather than the parents themselves. Hence it reflects the perception of the native-born descendants of immigrants from Turkey, and thus cannot be considered objectively accurate.

As previously discussed, fathers’ better linguistic performance in comparison to mothers could be due to their relatively higher education levels. Their greater labour market activity may also be a factor, and this becomes evident in the occupational status of the parents. The occupational activity of respondents' parents at the time of the interview was the major difference between the cities (Table 7). The fathers and mothers in Strasbourg were both more active in the labour market compared to those in Amsterdam.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7: Parents' activity at the time of the interview</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Economically Active in the Labour Market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: TIES Survey 2008

The activities of the fathers across age groups show that the major difference lies between fathers in their forties and fifties (Fig. 5). In Strasbourg, more than 80% of the fathers are in their forties and 50% of those in their fifties are still active in the labour market. In Amsterdam, by contrast, only 60% of those in their forties are still working and just 30% of those in their fifties.
Furthermore, the TIES survey also recorded the father and mothers’ occupational activity when the respondents were 15 years old (Table 8).

**Table 8: Parents’ activity when respondent aged 15**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Amsterdam</th>
<th></th>
<th>Strasbourg</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically active in the labour market</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
<td>87.3%</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: TIES Survey 2008

The respondents ranged between 18 and 35 years old at the time of the interview in 2007, and would have been aged 15 between 1987 and 2004. Across that period, in Strasbourg, a total of 87.3% of respondents' fathers were active in the labour market compared to 56.5% in Amsterdam. In Strasbourg, among the fathers who had been active, 72.7% had worked in skilled or unskilled jobs as blue-collar workers. Only 14.5% had been white-collar workers. In Amsterdam, 66% of respondents' fathers had worked in manual occupations as semi-skilled or unskilled labourers, and another 8% had worked in the services industry. If they were active, the majority of mothers in both cities also worked in low skilled jobs (Lessard-Phillips and Ross, 2012). By the 1990s, the majority of unskilled jobs had disappeared in Amsterdam, while, in Strasbourg, the manufacturing industry could still supply some of these jobs in the assembly line. Furthermore, while, in Amsterdam, the Turkish community’s attempt to build an ethnic niche in the garment industry ended in failure, and a niche in the construction sector failed to
materialize (Raes et al., 2002, Rath, 2002), in Strasbourg, the community succeeded in the construction sector, which became a strong niche supplying unskilled or semi-skilled jobs to Turkish men (Tapia, 2008). These parental activities proved crucial during the transitions of young people with regards to parental social capital and the guidance parents could provide in their children’s occupational decisions.

Additonally most of the TIES respondents came from large families. In Strasbourg, 55.6% had three siblings or more, meaning a household of at least six people or more. In Amsterdam, 49.4% had three siblings, while the remaining 30% had two siblings; at least five people per household. Hence the average number of siblings is around three for the native-born descendants of Turkish immigrants in Amsterdam and Strasbourg (Lessard-Phillips and Ross, 2012). The divorce rates among Turkish parents are relatively low; in Amsterdam, 95.8% of the parents were married at the time of the survey, while 20% had been separated in the past, while in Strasbourg, these figures were 97.4% and 15.4% respectively.

Finally, the qualitative interviews corroborated the findings of the quantitative analysis regarding family background. In Strasbourg, many respondents’ reported that their fathers worked on construction sites or in factories, while the majority of the fathers in Amsterdam were retired or on sick leave, except among the relatively younger respondents, who had a 1.5 generation parent. In both settings, parents who worked in semi-skilled or skilled jobs were from the 1.5 generation, with Dutch skills and knowledge about the labour market. Working as a cleaner was common among mothers in both settings. In Strasbourg, many mothers worked cleaning the parliament, while some worked in the assembly lines. In Amsterdam, most mothers were either housekeepers or worked part-time in unskilled jobs as cleaners or as sales assistants. Yet entrepreneurship was also common among parents, especially in the French construction sector. In Amsterdam, the entrepreneurial parents had taxi companies, day care centres or driving courses.

All in all, low parental education and employment rates and high parental dependency on welfare benefits, as well as coming from a large family are all significant realities in understanding respondents' transition experience. In addition to the differences in parents' conditions between Amsterdam and Strasbourg, the differences across families from the same city can also lead to distinct transition outcomes, and need to be considered when examining respondents' transition experiences.

4. Conclusion: Understanding the Social Class of Immigrant Parents from Turkey

This chapter outlined the TIES data about respondents’ parents, and supported it with information from the qualitative interviews. The findings illustrated that parents in both settings have comparable migration histories, age groups and education levels, while the parents in Strasbourg were more active in the labour
market compared to those in Amsterdam, both at the time of the interview and when the respondent was fifteen.

The education levels and occupational activity of the parents in Amsterdam and Strasbourg are important indicators of parental social class. In themselves, however, they may not adequately explain how these background characteristics are instrumental for the transitions of descendants of immigrants. The theory chapter discussed the findings of previous studies which illustrated that, even when education level is controlled for, differences can still be observed among immigrant parents and in comparison to the native-born parents with similar background characteristic (Brinbaum and Kieffer 2005, Van de Werfhorst and Van Tubergen, 2007). These differences could be due to aspiration levels or different measures of education across countries. Furthermore a study by Coenen (2001) showed that the difficult migration experience might lead many parents to develop higher expectations for their children in order to vicariously realize their own aspirations and break the circle of disadvantage by “not becoming like them”.

In the light of these findings, it is crucial to explore exactly how the function of parental social background might differ among the descendants of immigrants, though the majority of their parents share similar characteristics. Again, as discussed in theory chapter, Savage et al. (2005) propose that parental capital and assets should be scrutinized to understand how their social background helps to reproduce or transform inequalities at the micro level; in this case, during the transitions of young people. Unfortunately, the TIES Survey does not provide sufficiently detailed information about parental characteristics. Nevertheless, we can draw some observations crucial to our understanding of parents’ role from the quantitative description and fieldwork observations provided above.

For example, we see that some parents arrived in the Netherlands or in France before age 15 and studied there. This education in the host country may be said to have provided them with both language capital and cultural capital, particularly in terms of knowledge about how the education system works. Hence, we might expect these parents to be able provide distinct resources and forms of capital to their children during transition. Furthermore, in addition to acquiring more economic capital, parents who are active in the labour market are able to develop more language and social capital through their jobs. The analysis above showed that parents in Strasbourg were more active in the labour market compared to those of in Amsterdam. How this might influence young people’s transitions will be scrutinized since the personal contacts they develop can later serve as social capital for their children when they enter the labour market. As a result, different forms of capital developed and utilized by immigrant parents throughout their children’s transitions will be explored and compared across settings in the coming chapters.