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

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9: Conclusion

This study was inspired by studies in youth sociology on the new forms of transitions and aimed to contribute to the debate by exploring youth transitions among native-born descendants of immigrants from Turkey. Hence the study sought to contribute to two literatures; its focus on youth transitions introduced a different perspective to the literature on descendants of immigrants, while its focus on the descendants of immigrants aimed to fill a gap in youth transition studies.

The study sought to make a contribution to the debate in youth transition studies by analyzing the transition practice as a “process” rather than as an outcome. It thus understands transitions, not as a singular event, but as an ongoing series of practices. This approach concurs with findings of previous studies that postulated that youth transitions today are both complex and intertwined, as young people shift back and forth between education and work (Furlong, 2009, Schoon and Silbereisen, 2009, Wyn and Dwyer, 1999). Furthermore studying transitions as processes requires taking up a retrospective approach and trace the transitions back to secondary school experiences (Raffe, 2009, Van De Werfhorst and Mijs, 2010). The quantitative and qualitative research I present here has used a retrospective approach to track the transitions back to secondary school and then follow the trajectories of the respondents through their distinct educational tracks, student employment, internships and into the labour market. This approach to transition as a process makes it hard to report any “final” outcome of the transitions of the respondents, who were between 20 and 30 years old at the time, and whose trajectories were (and still are) open to transformation.

Reflecting on the data, it is also hard to claim that the current study is of the “transition to adulthood”. “Adulthood” has itself become a highly contested term, due in part to the non-linear nature of contemporary transitions. Previous studies have suggested alternative conceptions, such as “post-adolescence” (du Bois-Reymond, 1998) or “emerging adulthood” (Tanner and Arnett, 2009) to account for the extended period of transitions between adolescence and adulthood. This new condition challenges the idea of life as organized in sequences (Heinz, 2009). Hence postulating adulthood as an end stage runs the risk of demarcating life into organized stages (Bourdieu, 2000). Though the study design traces transitions from

early schooling and on into the labour market, it does not aim to underline a linear biographical approach. Instead, each chapter showed how complex and intertwined the transitions from school to work are and how they varied across settings. In addition, the study understood transitions as social *trajectories*; from secondary school experience to leaving education to pursuing different career and/or life trajectories afterwards. The concept of trajectories best suggests how institutional structures precondition transition pathways while young people navigate their transitions through the given conditions.

Next, the comparison of transitions in two European cities, Amsterdam and Strasbourg, drew attention to the role of macro-structural and especially institutional differences between these two settings in shaping the transition trajectories. The comparative mixed methods enabled both mapping and exploration of the dynamics of transitions in both settings in considerable detail. In the quantitative section of the research, I utilized the TIES survey, which was at the time the most elaborate and up-to-date city-level dataset available for both Amsterdam and Strasbourg, which allowed a robust comparison (Crul et al., 2012). In the quantitative sections I identified cohorts of both native-born descendants of immigrants and their peers with native-born parents, using the latter group as a comparison group and proxy for the general trends. For the qualitative section, I focused exclusively on a subset of TIES respondents from both locations who were native-born and both of whose parents had arrived from Turkey. I conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with 50 descendants of immigrants from Turkey to explore their individual experiences of and perspectives on their transition trajectories. The respondents of this study had parents who had followed similar migration histories, the majority having arrived in the 1970s from the central and eastern Anatolian regions. Nevertheless, the study illustrated that exposure to different national settings lead to differentiation of resources among both immigrant parents and their descendants. Considering both this heterogeneity and the primary concern of the study to explore individual experiences, it is also hard to identify the immigrants and their native-born descendants as a group; they neither form a homogenous collectivity nor organize around a “group” (Brubaker, 2004). The object of study here has thus been the experiences of youth transitions in distinct settings of the native-born descendants of immigrants from Turkey.

Empirical Findings: Structures, Forms of Capital and Trajectories

Transitions during School

The first structural difference between the two cities was the design of the education systems, especially with regard to early stratification. The way transitions develop cannot be examined without taking into account early tracking in education systems (Raffe, 2009, Van De Werfhorst and Mijs, 2010), and the study thus took a retrospective approach. Schools stream young people into different

educational trajectories at the age of 12 in Amsterdam and 15 in Strasbourg, and they subsequently follow distinct pathways leading to different opportunities in higher education and the labour market (Bol and Van De Werfhorst, 2012). In Amsterdam, the majority of native-born descendants of immigrants from Turkey were tracked into the vocational stream (72%) and the rest were advised to follow the academic stream which provided preparation and direct access to higher education. Among those following vocational tracks, only a minority (17%) later successfully managed to prolong their studies into higher education. In Strasbourg, the majority of the native-born descendants of immigrants were again streamed into a vocational track (54%) from which the majority left education with a vocational diploma. Compared to Amsterdam, a larger group accessed academic lyceums (38%). However, 30% of lyceum graduates left education before entering higher education. While modern youth transitions are often described as “prolonged”, the descriptive findings from the TIES survey reveal that prolonging studies and to delay transition is not a straightforward activity in every setting, and is preconditioned by early educational stratification. In other words, education systems which practice early stratification condition and limit how and the extent to which transition can be prolonged.

The qualitative interviews showed that some respondents’ parents had developed relevant cultural capital in the form of practical information about the educational system and early tracking. Parents gained this knowledge as a result of either their earlier arrival in the host country, their exposure to the education system, or their social networks. In both settings, informed parents sent their kids to prestigious schools, hoping this strategy would help their children gain access to better education, which was also documented in previous studies (Karsten et al., 2006). However, the respondents’ accounts of early tracking showed significant variance between settings. According to my respondents in Amsterdam, students’ early tracking decisions reflected their CITO score and their teachers’ advice, and neither the parents nor the respondents themselves played a significant role. In Strasbourg, however, the parents were able to influence the decision of the class council on whether their children could pursue an academic track. Tracking decisions in France were thus more amenable to parental demands and cultural capital, as well as the aspirations of the students. In the Netherlands, they were more strictly dependent on grades and teacher recommendations. This finding is reminiscent of previous studies of the key role of aspiration in educational achievement among immigrant parents and their children in France (Brinbaum and Kieffer, 2009).

The qualitative interviews also showed that, through access to internships and relevant part-time work, young people were able to develop not only occupational skills but also cultural and social capital instrumental for smoothing their future transitions into the labour market. This was particularly crucial for those higher education students without access to social networks via their parents or family. In terms of internships, vocational track students in Amsterdam had more internship

experience compared to those in Strasbourg. This was also the case for tertiary vocational education (HBO), where in Amsterdam students had extended periods of internships while in Strasbourg only one segment of tertiary vocational training provides such an opportunity: BTS *en Alternance*. However, these trainings were very difficult to access and in fact a few students who received financial support from their families and also mobilized the social capital of the parents were able to access highly competitive institutional arrangements like BTS *en Alternance*, which perpetuated development of more resources for the respondents themselves. Likewise, compared to Strasbourg, Amsterdam's greater variety of student jobs and more flexible schooling arrangements resulted in higher participation in work-study combinations. In both settings, those students able to secure student jobs relevant to their studies benefited most from student employment as they had a positive impact on their CVs. However, work-study combinations did not always lead to positive outcomes. In Strasbourg, difficult working arrangements and demanding school hours made it difficult for students to work while studying. In particular, those students who had to work to pay for their personal expenses while studying had difficulty combining the two and eventually dropped out of school. Parental financial capital thus emerged as a crucial factor in whether or not education could be prolonged and how. In Strasbourg, those students whose parents could guarantee their children's school and personal expenses could choose not to work if they felt it would harm their academic studies. In Amsterdam, all students worked, irrespective of their parents' income level. However, financially supportive parents still enabled students to be selective about employment opportunities and hold out for jobs that would improve their employability and network of contacts.

Consistent with previous studies (Milewski and Hamel, 2010), my findings illustrate that marriage is the most common and preferred cohabitation practice among the native-born descendants of immigrants from Turkey both in Strasbourg and Amsterdam, and it played a crucial role in respondents' transition processes. The majority of those who were single talked about marriage as one of their future goals. Some planned to wait until leaving school. Some—and especially those in higher education—were able to combine work and study with marriage. For the less-educated women respondents, who had limited options in the labour market or suffered from unemployment, marriage and building their own families provided an alternative pathway to leaving the parental home and gaining independence. For those who got married and built a family but continued their studies into higher education, the emotional and material support of their families, and especially of mothers who took care of grandchildren or housework duties, proved crucial in managing their complex transitions. Current study showed that this form of altruistic assistance and emotional resource, as documented by Skeggs (2004) among working class women and also by Reay (2004) which she named “emotional capital”, proved to be crucial assets during youth transitions of my respondents. This finding is illustrative of the growing need for parental assistance in coping the

growing individualization of risk and insecurity during youth transitions today (Jones, 2009).

In line with the broader trends highlighted in youth transition studies, native-born descendants of immigrants from Turkey experienced complex and prolonged transitions (Evans, 2002, Furlong, 2009, Wyn and Dwyer, 1999). However, such complexity and prolongation were hard to generalize among all respondents or across settings. Whether young people were successful in extending their studies or combining study with work or internships depended on the financial, cultural, social and emotional capital and resources of their families, the personal forms of capital they had developed themselves, and the opportunity structures that surrounded them. While the educational tracking process in Strasbourg provided these young people more open access to academic tracks, for the development of the different forms of capital necessary to ease the transition into the labour market, Amsterdam proved a more beneficial setting.

Transition after School

School leavers' transitions to their first job can be studied through the duration of the transition or the job that subjects' secure. This study focused on the degree of stability achieved in the labour market prior to the interview. Stability was measured through whether respondents secured a permanent contract or acquired stable work arrangements for long periods. Irrespective of respondents' job status or education levels, all the respondents reported seeking some stability in their careers or lives. In that sense, their transition motivations and goals determined my definition of transition trajectories.

The TIES data on post-school transitions was analysed using an innovative descriptive method called latent class analysis. The analysis resulted in a typology of six transition patterns; three active and three inactive. Among those active in the labour market, three latent classes of career were identified and named as; "early stable", "stable", and "shifting" transitions. Those in early stable transitions had the highest probability of achieving stable working arrangements in their first jobs. Those in stable transitions had a high likelihood of having changed jobs a few times before they stabilized in their current jobs. These two categories are reminiscent of the smooth and traditional transitions described in the literature (Evans, 2002, Plug and Bois-Reymond, 2006). However, the latent class analysis produced a distinction between those who made a smooth transition in their first job and those who went through a few jobs before acquiring a stable contract. Those who experienced shifting transitions had the least probability of securing permanent contracts and higher probability of unemployment or insecure or working arrangements. Shifting transitions paralleled the "shifters" of Bradley and Devadason's study (Bradley and Devadason, 2008), who experienced cyclical movements between work, study and other arrangements. Among the inactive

respondents, a model with three latent classes was selected and the categories names as; “inactivity”, “stagnant transitions” and “in-transitions”. Respondents classified as inactive had the highest probability of being out of the labour market for the longest time and were unwilling to start working. Those with stagnant transitions had a higher likelihood of unemployment and for a longer period but were willing to enter the labour market. Those in the last, in-transition group had a higher likelihood of unemployment for shorter periods. The transition literature documents both inactive and stagnant careers using similar terminology of “stagnation” or “downward” transitions (Plug and Bois-Reymond, 2006).

The distribution of these transition typologies varied across settings. Firstly, making no distinction between the native-born descendants of Turkish immigrants and the comparison group, more active respondents demonstrated shifting transitions in Strasbourg (37%) compared to Amsterdam (16.7%). Those with either early stable or stable transitions were still the largest group in both settings but formed a higher proportion in Amsterdam (83.3%) than in Strasbourg (63%). When we look at the comparative distributions among the native-born descendants of immigrants from Turkey, there is a higher incidence of shifting careers compared to the comparison group in both cities, but again the proportion is higher in Strasbourg. Among the inactive profiles, native-born descendants of immigrants from Turkey are more present in both settings. The distribution of transition trajectories also varied according to respondents’ educational careers. The majority of the stable and smooth transition holders in Amsterdam and Strasbourg possessed tertiary diplomas. However, a considerable number of highly educated respondents demonstrated shifting status, consistent with previous findings that shifter careers are not only found among the less educated (Fenton and Dermott, 2006). Nevertheless, those respondents who dropped out of lower secondary education without a minimum diploma (a VMBO or *collège* certificate) experience the highest rates of inactive or shifting transitions both in Amsterdam and Strasbourg. Age also turned out to be a significant marker as the likelihood of having a stable career increased with age in both cities. Furthermore, when we compare across settings, we see that more people in Amsterdam acquired a stable career at a younger age than in Strasbourg.

The profiles of the qualitative interview respondents were then compared with the typology created by latent class analysis focusing only on the native-born descendants of immigrants from Turkey sampled from the TIES survey respondents in Amsterdam and Strasbourg.

The qualitative interviews underlined the motivations that young people had for the given transition patterns and the trajectories they had pursued to reach these conditions. In Amsterdam, those with early stable and stable transitions had a post-secondary vocational diploma (MBO) or a higher education degree (HBO or University). They either made transitions directly from their internships or student

jobs or later through the contacts such positions helped them built. Most of these respondents had a clear idea of the career they wanted to pursue in their minds, which they have developed as a result of their prior exposure to such jobs, and they were content with the way their careers had turned out. Since most of them had followed institutionally defined pathways to achieve these careers, both early stable or stable careers can be described as similar to the smooth and traditional careers defined in youth transition studies (du Bois-Reymond, 1998, Plug and Bois-Reymond, 2006). However, such transitions were not easily achieved by all those with an MBO or an HBO diploma. While the majority of those in shifting careers were MBO dropouts, some MBO graduates also experienced cyclical moves between work, study and education. While these respondents did not experience much difficulty finding full- or part-time work, they had not been able to obtain a permanent contract or a long-term working arrangement in the worsening economic conditions. Most of my respondents in shifting careers were male, and some mentioned ambitions to achieve future stability and status in the labour market by starting their own companies and becoming entrepreneurs.

However, in Strasbourg, the interviews revealed a stark contrast in how stability is both achieved and perceived. The few respondents who experienced early stable careers in Strasbourg held a diploma from a BTS *en Alternance* or a degree from a Grande École. Students with BTS *en Alternance* combined study with work, and employers paid for their study costs. As such study programs were at the discretion of employers, students had to work extremely hard and mobilize social capital to access them. The remaining respondents all experienced extended periods of unemployment and several job changes before they manage to stabilize in a position. In Strasbourg, most young people had to look for a job for a minimum of six months (compared to much shorter periods in Amsterdam). Hence even those with BTS or BEP diplomas shifted between different statuses. Almost all of those with vocational diplomas clustered in shifting careers, which consisted mainly of unskilled jobs under difficult working conditions with almost no security, contracted mainly through employment agencies, which provided precarious employment arrangements. The pathway to a stable career is thus decidedly different in Strasbourg compared to Amsterdam, underlining the variance in definitions of stable or smooth transitions across settings (Evans and Heinz, 1994).

According to the quantitative analysis those defined as in stagnant transitions had a higher likelihood of being unemployed longer than 12 months. None of the interview respondents in Amsterdam had been inactive while seeking work for longer than 12 months, though some had been unemployed for three to four months, as in the in-transition category. In Strasbourg a few female respondents, who dropped out of school and became housewives stated that they have never worked but they were willing to work so they might fall under the stagnant category. However looking at my respondents who were unemployed during the

qualitative interviews in both settings, they relied on part-time or insecure work while they were looking for a “good job”. Some were constantly moving between education and work, relying on further study options to try their chances in other sectors. Such respondents were also representative of the shifting category, as they had often been switching between unstable jobs and inactivity precarious or short-term and unstable jobs since leaving school. Though some certainly seemed to suffer from a certain lack of direction and many openly stated that they felt lost about what to do with their lives, their conditions were not the result of conscious choice. It should be remembered that even those with established aims and determination were limited to the conditions on offer to young people in the labour market at the time of the interviews.

The last cluster of respondents was those with inactive careers, in which the majority were female native-born descendants of immigrants from Turkey. Most of these young women were married and had become homemakers. Some had dropped out of education without a minimum diploma while others had only a vocational diploma or, in France, only a lyceum diploma (*baccalauréat*). Almost all of my respondents had tried unsuccessfully to find jobs, or had worked in low-skilled jobs such as cleaning or production-line assembly. Most of these women preferred staying at home and taking care of their children to returning to such jobs. For these women, following matrimonial strategies had proved more instrumental than labour market or educational pathways in achieving a form of stability, and this finding resembles Evans and Heinz’s study of working class girls in the UK (Evans and Heinz, 1994). These women understand stability as avoiding shifting between insecure statuses and holding on to one, despite its disadvantages being dependent on their husbands or families. Nevertheless, most of these women voiced aspirations to go back to education and/or try to enter the labour market again.

In addition to education and labour market related factors, two other dynamics recurrently arose during the interviews. First of all, the majority of respondents repeatedly mentioned unpleasant events that had led to feelings of exclusion or discrimination³⁶ in the workplace. Almost all expressed feelings of insecurity in the workplace and many said that they had felt obliged to account to colleagues and bosses for their religious practices,³⁷ their physical appearance,³⁸ or their parents’

36 My respondents could not of course prove that the experiences they referred to were acts of discrimination or of racism. However, it was important for the interview process that they felt able to describe their feelings and perceptions of what they experienced. Here I am trying to understand how this might have influenced their career and motivations; for example, in deciding to leave a particular job or stay in it, to cope with the feelings or ignore them.

37 These included fasting during Ramadan or not drinking alcohol, which led to questions by colleagues and sometimes even repetitions of these questions each year and in every instance.

38 Some respondents claimed they had avoided discrimination or racism thanks to having less Arabic-sounding names or looking more Mediterranean. More than “ethnic” or “racial” markers, they claimed that physical

immigration background, undermining their feelings of acceptance in the workplace. These past experiences fed into present and future perceptions of inequality and discrimination, which informed their perceptions of their own chances of promotion or of finding a better job. The motivation to acquire job security should also be evaluated with regards to how accepted young people feel in their working environment. It is debateable whether, if young people felt they had achieved acceptance and respect in a workplace, they would still consider leaving or risking another career change.

Finally, many consider leaving the parental home another crucial part of youth transitions. Yet among the respondents, leaving home at eighteen to live alone was not a common practice. The majority did not leave their parents' home before marriage, unless they went away to study. The latter was uncommon because the study took place in two large cities with good higher education opportunities and expensive living arrangements. In Amsterdam, the difficulties of finding cheap housing rendered it almost illogical to leave home, and some respondents continued to live with their parents even after getting married. In Strasbourg, the conditions were slightly different; social housing still offered a solution if respondents were willing to live in deprived neighbourhoods. Nevertheless, even here some preferred staying with parents in order to benefit from their mothers' practical help while managing their transitions. As a result, housing arrangements play a significant role in young people's motivations to achieve stability. In the face of the declining social housing market, permanent job contracts are the only way in which young people can access mortgage arrangements and purchase their own houses.

Theoretical Implications

Youth Transitions

The findings of the study show that youth transitions are not singular events but an intertwined set of processes that shape future conditions and possibilities from an early age. From early stratification onwards, young people follow a series of different pathways and each step creates the conditions in which subsequent transition takes place. The study has shown that native-born descendants of immigrants from Turkey also experienced complex and prolonged transitions. However, whether this prolongation and complexity ultimately lead to stable transitions depended both on the institutional structures and the different forms of capital that were available to young people through their families and the capital they have developed over time. With regard to complex transitions, Amsterdam provided young people with more opportunities for work-study combinations

appearance and dress codes were important ways in which they dealt with the stigma created by their parents' immigration background.

through which they could develop different forms of capital crucial for transitions. However, the findings do not justify recommending young people's early involvement in the labour market during their transitions, as it also proved detrimental for the studies of some students, especially in Strasbourg. Nevertheless, where students could not rely on their parents to provide the necessary forms of capital to assist their transitions, were able to develop resources via working in career-relevant jobs and this was more plausible in Amsterdam due to its more flexible work and study arrangements.

With regards to transition typologies, the comparative nature of the study illustrated that the definition of a smooth transition or a traditional trajectory varied significantly across settings. In Amsterdam, young people expected to experienced smooth and stable careers at an earlier age compared to those in Strasbourg, who took longer to stabilize in their careers. With regard to the forms of youth transitions, previous studies have postulated a distinction between institutionally designed "traditional" transitions and shifting or alternative biographies in which young people follow unconventional pathways. The majority of my respondents followed (or aspired to follow) stable and traditional pathways, but to different extends in both cities. For those who did not follow such transitions, their transition practice did not always stem from their orientations or decisions per se. Many young people could not follow such transitions and had to shift between part-time jobs or training due to labour market conditions. Furthermore, most of their actions were not defined only by themselves at the "moment" of transition, but earlier during educational tracking or through the experience of work-study combinations, and they had thus built vastly different forms of capital and levels of resources before they entered the labour market. Thus, the study recommends terminology of transition trajectories to emphasize how institutional structures initially set or skew the conditions of young people's transitions.

Yet this does not necessarily mean that the concept of "choice biographies", by which young people choose to follow unconventional pathways, are entirely redundant or that young people have no agency to navigate their transitions. Nevertheless, I would argue that the idea of choice biographies was chiefly of its time in the 1990s when economies were prospering and young people had the luxury of postponing their entry into the labour market and investing time in discovering themselves. In adopting the metaphor of "navigation" (du Bois-Reymond, 2009b), choice biography theory refers to the conditions when young people are/were the captains of their own ships and thought of sailing the world's waters before anchoring in any setting. At the risk of straining the metaphor, while young people are still captains of their own ships, the naval conditions have become much harder, the size and resources of the ships now matter terribly, and young people worry more about reaching their destination. Though young people may still follow unconventional routes, these might result from the sailing conditions rather than the decisions of the captains, who may have to be unusually

creative just to stay on course. Hence the agency of the respondents should be evaluated in the face of the structural conditions that are facing them. I argue that this does not deny them agency. Each youth transition is a product of its own time and place. Facing austerity measures, economic crisis and fear of unemployment, the young people in the current study sought stability above all else.

Fields ⇔ Capital: Understanding Social Class within Given Structures

In order to understand the role of Turkish immigrant parents, as well as the resources available to respondents during their transitions, the study explored different forms and volumes of capital in relation to the structures that surround them. This approach has brought two advantages.

Firstly, using forms of capital to understand social class composition helps to discern the crucial differences among immigrant parents, who may otherwise seem to share a similar class position. Since the majority of Turkish immigrants came from rural areas, had low educational credentials, and worked in low skilled manufacturing jobs, they have usually been categorized as having an “almost identical” lower class background (Bocker, 2000). Following Bourdieu’s understanding of social class, Savage, Warde and Devine (2005) propose what they call “the CARs approach”. This sets out to understand micro formations of social inequality through the different forms of capital and resources that individuals accumulate and invest. The current study has highlighted how the different forms of capital immigrant parents either bring to or develop in their new contexts of settlement allow them to assist their children’s transition. For example, a parent working in a low-status job may have more cultural and social capital through his networks and interactions with colleagues than one with a similar education level but dependent on benefits and staying at home.

Secondly, the symbolic value of a form of capital is defined in relation to the certain fields in which the social trajectories of immigrant parents’ children are located. Hence I not only identified the different forms of capital that immigrant parents and their descendants possess or develop over time, but I also tried to explain the relational aspect of capital pertaining to certain settings. Understanding different forms of capital in close relation to fields could help us understand both what kind of resources could be of use to young people and their parents in the given conditions and also what their limitations are. If a parent works in the construction business in Strasbourg, his networks will not be directly instrumental for his daughter who is a university graduate, but will be crucial for his son-in-law who has just arrived from Turkey with no French proficiency this will indirectly support his daughter’s family. Furthermore, the social capital of a father in the construction sector (a niche of Turkish immigrants) in Strasbourg will have different value to that of a father working in the same sector (not a niche) in Amsterdam. None of the forms of capital are specific to a certain (ethnic or other) group since they originate from certain conditions and relate to particular

structures. On the contrary whether different forms of capital were instrumental or not for the native-born descendants of immigrants from Turkey, they could also be of use (or not) to others who live in the given structures under similar structures.

The Concept of a “Generation” in Transition

My findings contribute to debates in “second generation” research by incorporating insights from an increasing body of comparative research on the descendants of immigrants in Europe (Crul and Schneider 2010). In particular, comparisons underscore the institutional differences in education systems and how their interaction with labour markets shapes the conditions under which descendants of immigrants experience their transitions (Van De Werfhorst and Mijs, 2010). This study found different country-level institutional arrangements were to be crucial for transition processes, conditioning them from very early educational stage. Furthermore, the distinct economic and opportunity structures at the city level are also key determinants of the labour and housing market opportunities available during transition.

This comparison also required careful operationalization of the “generation” concept. First, it proved crucial to check whether immigrant parents had arrived during similar migration flows, which proved to be the case that the majority arrived via the guest workers scheme. Next the selection of subjects was limited to certain cohorts, focusing on those between 20 and 30 years old. Despite all having been born and raised in the Netherlands or France, the respondents had parents from different “generations” as generally understood. Some were the youngest children of the original guest workers (or “first generation”) and others were their eldest grandchildren, meaning that their parents were so-called 1.5 generation immigrants who had arrived in the Netherlands or France as adolescents. This was the case both in Amsterdam and in Strasbourg. In this study, these different parental generations had implications for the different forms of capital parents were able to provide during transitions. This condition challenges the usage of “second generation” concept as a parameter of generational gap since each second generation does not share the same gap with their parents. In fact similar conditions were highlighted before in the literature with regards to challenging the second-generation concept (Santelli, 2004, Waters and Jimenez, 2005). As a result a more nuanced application of the generation terminology is proposed inspired by the youth sociology (Wyn and Woodman, 2006), via exploring whether the respondents themselves can be interpreted as coming from a “generation” who share a similar social, economic and political milieu regarding their transitions. Many of these young people certainly seem to share similar concerns about achieving stability, shifting between jobs, educational credentialism and precarious working arrangements. Hence rather than naming them as “second generation” but they are a generation of young people born to immigrant parents from Turkey between mid-1980s and mid-1990s. Wyn and Woodman (Wyn and Woodman, 2006) argued for a generational approach and postulated a post-1970 generation,

which is different from the baby boomers generation of industrial economy. While certain conditions of the post-1970 generation comply with my respondents, I would still refrain from placing this generation in complete opposition to any other generation as they share similarities and differences. For example while their educational and labour market related concerns are very distinct from their parents, many of my respondents share similar orientations with their parents to marriage and gender roles, whereby young women resort to inactivity as a strategy to cope with transitions. Current study suggests to employ the term generation with precaution and ideally after paying sufficient attention to birth cohorts, parents' time of arrival in the host countries as well as the social, economic and political conditions of the milieu. With these concerns in mind describing them as a "generation in transition" emphasizes both the temporality of the concept itself and its relation to youth transitions.

Finally, rather than operationalizing "ethnicity" as a variable shaping the experience of these young people, this research has focused on how the transition experience is influenced by the fact of having immigrant parents, who have particular forms of capital and resources available with which to assist their children. However, the implications of findings need not be limited to the descendants of the immigrants themselves. The broader aim was to identify which forms of capital were significant in given fields for the achievement of successful transitions and to highlight the structural arrangements that favoured the development of forms of capital throughout young people's trajectories. While not trying to generalize my empirical findings, I would argue that the transition experience of young people with native-born parents would be equally dependent on the forms of capital they could rely on at home and how they experienced their social trajectories. If a child of native parents could not rely on their full financial or emotional support during his or her transition, then they could be in an even worse situation than many of the young people described in this study (Altinyelken et al., 2010). Success in transition does not depend on the "group" or the "individual" per se but on the relation between capital and the fields that constantly re/define what is required but also what is reasonable. My choice of respondents in the current study was driven by the motivation to compare people with broadly similar familial backgrounds in different institutional and structural settings. Future studies might focus on one context comparing young people with different parental backgrounds, which would help identify how the different forms of capital work distinctly in the same setting.

Youth transitions are the products of their time, their location, and their participants. Each generation of young people faces new conditions, responds with new strategies, and introduces new understandings, providing transition researchers with exciting opportunities but also grave challenges. Trying to understand the realities young people face today helps us understand the dynamics of youth transitions, and it also cedes centre stage to young people who are after all their principal bearers.