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Union formation and partner choice of the second generation of Turkish origin in Europe: The influence of third parties and institutional context

The aim of this thesis is to gain more insight into union formation and partner choice among second-generation young adults of Turkish descent born in Europe. This study addresses two overarching research questions:

A) What union formation patterns are observed among the Turkish second generation? How do these patterns differ from other ethnic groups? How do these patterns differ between second-generation Turks in different European countries?

B) How can we explain union formation patterns within the Turkish second generation? In particular, what are the roles of third parties and the institutional context?

Specifically, this thesis studies how various aspects of union formation among second-generation Turks in seven European countries are affected by characteristics of the individual, the family of origin, the embeddedness into non-co-ethnic networks and the existence of macro-level factors such as group size and policies connected to welfare state and integration regimes. Among the choices studied are timing of first union and first marriage, the ethnic origin of the partner, the choice between direct marriage vs. cohabitation (before marriage), and choices regarding the division of labor within a union.

While union formation decisions are well-studied among the European majority populations, we know relatively little about different union formation choices (with the exception of intermarriage) among migrants and in particular their descendants. A broader understanding of factors influencing union formation choices among the children of migrants is important as particularly among the younger age groups large parts of the populations are second-generation youth and many important societal questions and future population trends relate to their behavior in the family domain. Potentially different processes underlie the union formation choices of young adults of migration origin. They are faced with balancing potentially different values and behaviors on family formation: those their parents brought with them and the ones of the country they were born and grew up in. This may be most evident for children of migrants originating from more collectivist cultures that differ from the more individualistic ones in Europe as different family formation tradition exist within these groups. How these different influences affect union formation remains unclear. It is also likely that structural constraints at the country (or city) level affect these union formation decisions, but little is known on these differences across countries.

One of the reasons for the limited knowledge in this domain is, of course, the limited data availability on the second generation in general but even more so in an European comparative perspective. Using data from “The Integration of the European Second Generation” (TIES 2007-08) survey allows a three-way comparative approach (inter-and intra-group and across...
countries). The special features of the TIES survey are that a similar design and questionnaire was used in all the participating countries and that the survey concentrated on second-generation migrants aged 18-35 years living in large European cities in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland.

We focus on the second generation of Turkish descent for three reasons. First, Turkish migrants and their descendant are the largest non-Western group in Europe and they have settled all over North Western Europe. Second, a large part of the Turkish second generation is now in their twenties and thirties, thus in the age of family formation, and they share the characteristic that they were born primarily to labor migrants from the 1960s. This common background makes them more comparable. Third, different cultural traditions and integration debates made the Turkish community more visible in public.

This thesis aims to contribute to the literature in several ways. First, we study not only intermarriage but include several aspects of union formation behavior. The result is a more thorough picture of how migration, settlement processes and interactions with various groups within a new country is of influence on the union formation behavior of the descendants of migrants in Europe. Second, we take a European comparative perspective and take possible structural influences into account. This perspective has not been often applied before in this area of study. Finally, we pay attention to the multiple spheres of influence that impinge on second-generation young adults. We studied how members of their two main spheres of contact influence the second generation: their parents and (non-coethnic) peers. The inclusion of the latter group is the most innovative contribution, as generally very little is known of the role of peers in union formation decisions, although adolescents spend a large part of their time with age peers.

**Patterns of union formation and partner choice among the Turkish second generation**

Generally, the findings indicate that the union formation choices of the Turkish second-generation differ from that of European majority populations. All seven countries and cities analyzed in this study show overall similar patterns: Cohabitation remains still marginal and direct marriage most common. Union formation occurs in the early twenties and a large part of the second generation still marries a partner from Turkey. However, parts of this young and growing subpopulation within Europe are displaying changes. These findings are similar to single country study results. However, this study’s set-up allows the exploration of variations within the Turkish second-generation group, between groups and across countries.

In case of the Netherlands (Chapter 2), we compare the union formation of the Turkish second generation to that of the Moroccan second generation and native Dutch young adults. The union formation patterns of second-generation Turks are more traditional than those of the other two groups. Native Dutch young adults are more characterized by individualization and diversification in their union formation choices: the majority of these young adults in a relationship has lived in an unmarried cohabitation and only 20 percent of them are married by age 30 compared to 70 percent of the Turkish second generation. The Moroccan second generation holds an in-between position compared to the other two groups. They enter later
into a first union and first marriage than the Turkish second generation, but earlier than native Dutch. Similar to the Turkish second generation, the majority of the Moroccan second generation has a partner from their parents’ country of origin, but the percentages are lower compared to the Turkish group. Both second-generation groups’ cohabitation rates are low.

Chapters 3 to 5 compare the Turkish second generation of several West European countries. Chapter 3 shows that the entry into a first union differs with later timing in Germany, Switzerland and France and earlier timing in Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands and Sweden. Turning to partner choice in Chapter 4, we find that a first-generation partner from Turkey remains the most common partner choice. However, in Sweden and Germany and for men in France and Switzerland, adding the percentages of the other three partner choices (a Turkish second-generation partner, a native and another migrant partner) results in a larger percentage than having a first-generation partner from Turkey. In Germany, having a second-generation partner of Turkish descent is a more common choice than having a first-generation partner from Turkey. This is likely due to the much larger number of Turkish second-generation young adults in Germany compared to the other countries. In Chapter 5, the gender-role behavior within a union shows the importance of the country context. Previous research found that the Turkish group has more traditional gender-role attitudes. However, comparing the second generation across countries shows that their childcare and routine household behavior follows similar patterns than those of the majority group. This means that for example in Germany, where the majority population displays one of the most traditional gender-role behaviors compared to other Western European countries, the Turkish second generation has equally the most traditional values. By contrast, the Turkish second generation in Sweden has similar to the native Swedes the most egalitarian behavior. In addition, the Turkish second generation in Sweden is more likely to have both the man and the woman contribute to the household income.

Some findings vary by city, e.g. in Paris men are more likely to have a migrant partner of other origin and in Paris and Zurich entry into a union occurs later than in Strasbourg and Basel. This is likely caused by compositional effects of the Turkish group for instance in Zurich many parents originate from Maramar and other urban regions in Turkey and in Paris may reside more university students and higher renting prices result in a postponement of union formation. Similarly the higher number of foreigners in Paris may lead to more partners from this group. However, most of the Turkish second generation, living in different cities within one country, show very similar behavioral patterns.

The role of third parties

Union formation does not only vary between groups or countries but also within the Turkish second-generation group. To explain these variations we look at the multiple influence spheres – each with their own cultural and societal opportunities and constraints – influencing union formation processes.
The role of parents. Parents remain crucial in shaping the life course choices of their children, although their overall influence is becoming smaller in adolescence when adolescents form more ties outside their family of origin. Parents may either enable or hinder behavior and this may particularly be the case among young adults from more collectivistic oriented cultures like the Turkish one, where parents often still take an active role in the union formation choices of their children.

The findings indicate that family values differ among the Turkish group and that these differences are essential in predicting union formation. For instance, Turkish second-generation young adults are more likely to postpone union formation (Chapter 3) and to have a native or other migrant partner (Chapter 4) when their parents has a higher educational level, the language proficiency of their parents is higher, their mother worked during the child’s adolescence, they have fewer siblings, and their parents do not originate from a rural and/or rural Anatolian region. These parental characteristics can all be perceived as indicators of more modern family values. If parents have the opposite characteristics, they are more likely to endorse more traditional family values which are linked to the family-initiated marriage system. More traditional family values increase the likelihood of earlier union formation and the choice of a marriage partner from Turkey. Generally, the findings show that parental background characteristics remain important in predicting partner choice and union formation also among the second generation. This indicates that parents still socialize their children with the values with which they grew up themselves. For some, particularly those with a low social status, these values may even become more pronounced through the migration experience. However, we find for the timing of union formation (Chapter 3) that the educational level of the children becomes more important than human capital of the parents. Thus, while transmission from parents to children remains strong, it seems to be weakening for union formation aspects that are less linked to core family values of the parental generation.

The role of peers. Although less studied, peers are equally relevant for life course choices of young adults. For second-generation Turks, peers may often represent their main contact to the majority population, in particular if these peers are from outside their own ethnic group. These non-coethnic peers potentially have different views and behavior with regard to union formation. In encountering these different views and behaviors, changes may occur among the Turkish second generation.

The importance of persons outside the family is clear in all empirical chapters. The effect of non-coethnic peers is strong and persistent. We find significant effects for all aspects studied: timing of first union and marriage (Chapter 2, 3), partner type (Chapter 4) and union type (Chapter 2). More contact with non-coethnic networks results in a higher likelihood of postponement of union formation, of having a native or other migrant partner and of opting for cohabitation. However, the effects are not equally strong for every aspect of union formation. Peers overall are important, but their influence seems stronger for aspects of union formation that are linked to practical aspects and weaker for aspects that are central to the
own ethnic group identity. Thus, while there are clear effects of both close friends and acquaintances for timing aspects, the role of more distant acquaintances is limited or non-existent for partner choice and type of union. Nevertheless, these findings still emphasize the importance of peers. Considering that parental value transmission among the Turkish second generation is strong, these peer effect findings remain important even when controlling for parental characteristics.

We find also that friends and more distant acquaintances have different roles. Close friends are clearly most important for union formation and partner choice. They offer both support and pressure, e.g. through processes of social learning and social influence, and their influence is quite similar to the one exercised by parents, and extends also to different aspects of union formation. By contrast, the effects of more distant peer networks is more related to the diffusion of new ideas and their influence on union formation decisions is weaker. In our case, we found that the ethnic composition of the secondary school, a proxy for more distant networks, has a u-shape effect on timing of first marriage and union formation and on first-generation and native partner choice. Postponement of union formation and the above mentioned partner choices are more likely in the case when the majority population is neither the majority nor the minority group in school. We discussed that this could be an effect of different majority-minority situations. In case there are few minority students they build close co-ethnic networks and heavily influence each other, in case these minorities represent the majority group in school they are dominant and thus unlikely to be influenced by the native group. The in-between situation, where the groups are equally sized, maximized the peer effects. This finding implies that social integration and the spreading of new behaviors might be largest in a mixed school context.

We concentrate mainly on the importance of having non-coethnic peers and union formation behavior. However, as shown in Chapter 4, the role of co-ethnic peers for partner choice also becomes visible. On the one hand, having few non-coethnic friends is an indicator of a low level of contact to the majority group and a higher likelihood of importing a partner from Turkey. On the other hand, having many co-ethnic friends offers also more chance of finding a Turkish second-generation partner. In contrast to those with a first-generation partner, whose partnership is more likely to be arranged, those with a second-generation partner met their partner mainly via friends, thus according to the love marriage system. With an increasing number of young adults of their own origin in their local environment, the Turkish second generation and following generations will be more likely to meet suitable partners in their peer networks. Consequently, it seems likely that in the future the arranged marriage system will lose in importance for this group.

**The role of the institutional context**

A cross-country comparison helps to understand the influence of the national context on behaviors and to discover differences unrelated to individual characteristics. Policies, specifically targeted at migrants or at families in general, offer arrangements that may facilitate or hinder choices with regard to union formation. Migration and integration policies
shape the lives of migrants and their descendants, for example by determining the timing or possibilities for family reunification and setting requirements for legal entry of partners. Thereby countries with multicultural integration policies are supposed to enable migrant groups to live more according to their own cultural values and traditions than countries with more restrictive integration policies. In addition, welfare state regimes not only influence the life of the members of the majority population, but equally those of migrants and their descendants through regulations on eligibility and access to resources. As these policies differ by country, the place of residence is an important factor when studying the union formation among the Turkish second generation.

Although we cannot directly test actual policy effects, the results suggest the importance of structural factors. We discuss various aspects: the group size of the Turkish second generation and the influence of migration and integration policies on the ethnic origin of the partner (Chapter 4); the role of migration and integration policies versus general welfare state policies directed at young adults for timing of union formation (Chapter 3), and the role of welfare regimes promoting specific gender-role behavior (Chapter 5).

In Chapter 3, we study whether there living in a country with multicultural policies would lead to more traditional union formation timing and a greater influence of parents. We only find partial support. The Turkish second generation in Belgium, the Netherlands and Sweden, all countries with different levels of multicultural policies, but also in Austria, a country with more restrictive integration policies, enter earlier into a union than those in France, Switzerland and Germany - countries with more restrictive integration regimes. However, our related hypothesis that parents and peers are of different importance in different integration regimes is not supported. Against our expectations, parents have a stronger effect in countries promoting integration and the effect of peers does not differ by integration regime. In Chapter 4, we also examine the role of integration policies by arguing that partner choice is linked to different integration regimes, because they allow family reunification to varying degrees. In this case, the expected effect is observed. In countries with less strict laws on integration and family reunification, the Turkish second-generation is more likely to have a first-generation partner from Turkey and less likely to have a second-generation partner from their own community than in countries where family reunification is more restricted.

We examine the relevance of general welfare policies in Chapters 3 and 5. In Chapter 3, as discussed in the previous paragraph, residing in a country with predominantly multicultural policies cannot explain country differences in union timing. Consequently, we look for other possible connections and argue that the pattern of early union formation is likely related to welfare policies providing young adults with more opportunities to establish their own household. In Chapter 5, as discussed above, we find that welfare state policies promoting certain family support models lead to the same country-specific patterns of gender-role behavior among the Turkish second generation as reported for the majority populations in different European countries.

These findings raise the question which type of policy is more important in influencing union formation among Turkish second generation: policies targeting migrants in particular or
policies directed at the general population. From our findings, we cannot give a definite answer to this question. General welfare policies seem to be relevant to explain union formation behavior of second-generation Turks by influencing the abilities of young people to become independent and form a union and they influence the opportunities for women to focus on paid labor. For the immigration and integration policies that are directed at migrants the results are less clear. The immigration policies seem to affect union formation of second-generation Turks, in particular those in relation to family reunification and thus affecting (transnational) partner choice. However, the effect of integration policies seems to be less obvious. This may be caused by the fact that for example in countries like Sweden the emphasis on multicultural policies is counterbalanced by the emphasis on individual-decision making that is prominent in the general welfare policies. Finally, integration policies can have an indirect effect by reflecting the public opinion and the general climates with regard to migrant group acceptance. This may affect the union formation behavior of second-generation Turks. If the Turkish group has a low social standing and acceptance in society this may make them less likely to intermarry with natives. Thus the overall conclusion is that the exact mechanisms of the policies remain unclear, and while some of these policies seem to have yielded clearer results, other policies may just as well be active and just be counterbalanced.

Limitations
While the findings of this thesis give new insights into union formation of Turkish second generation, two limitations should be mentioned. First, it is an urban sample and thus not a representative dataset at the country level. Therefore, we cannot generalize all findings but they apply only to our urban Turkish second-generation. Second, it would be an asset when the effects of specific policies could be measured more directly than we could do in this study and a larger set of countries would be helpful in this respect. In this thesis, we cannot study actual effects of welfare state regimes or various policies, but rather have to assume and discuss possible connections between union formation and macro level effects. This approach can clearly be improved upon, however it still reveals important findings.