

Extended abstract

The influence of family and non-coethnic peers on timing of union formation among the Turkish second generation in Europe

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Introduction

The decision of when to start living with a partner is among the most important decisions of young adults. This choice is not made independently but influenced by other social actors. In the past, the influence of the family of origin has received most attention (Starrels and Holm 2000; Li and Wojtkiewicz 1994; Kiernan 1992; Thornton 1991), although it is known that friends can be influential as well on young adults' behavior (Harris 1995; Shah and Zelnik 1981). Studies focusing on social interaction with acquaintances or on contacts within institutions show the importance of these ties for information and value diffusion (Granovetter 1973; Montgomery and Casterline 1993). This may also be the case for the timing of union formation.

A helpful approach to study the influence of different social actors is the concept of social embeddedness. Social embeddedness refers to the different networks a person is integrated in. A main distinction can be made between family and non-family networks. A further distinction to specify embeddedness can be made by distinguishing between two types of social contacts, weak and strong ties (Granovetter 1973). Strong ties consist of family members and close friends and weak ties of acquaintances. These ties offer different types of resources and constraints resulting in different information access and ultimate behaviors (Moody and White 2003).

In this paper we will analyze the influence of the family of origin and the influence of weak and strong ties in non-family networks on the timing of union formation of the Turkish second generation in 11 European cities in six countries (Austria, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland). Focusing on second-generation Turks is particularly interesting given that they navigate between family and friends, which can give rise to conflicts as the views and behaviors within non-family networks may differ from those in the family (Haug 2005). Turkish children of immigrants are particularly likely to be exposed to different views on union formation (De Valk 2006; De Valk and Liefbroer 2007). Their parents come from a more familistic and patriarchal society, where partner choice is strongly determined by the parents and where marriage in the early twenties is universal (Çelikaksoy, Nielson and Verner 2003; Nauck 2002b). This contrasts with the situation in many European countries where changes in family values and an emphasis on individualization is reflected in increasingly heterogeneous family formation patterns (postponement of marriage and childbearing, increasing cohabitation and divorce, low fertility) (Corijn and Klijzing 2001; Elzinga and Liefbroer 2007).

Despite the fact that we may expect an influence of the wider social network on union formation choices of these youth, little is known on how the wider social network (outside the family) is relevant. One can assume that especially in the case of networks with many people from outside the own ethnic group contrasting views on union formation will be encountered. Yet, not all kind of contacts with natives and persons of other ethnic groups may be equally

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important in influencing union formation choices of second-generation youths. Strong ties such as close friends, especially during adolescent years, are of particular importance. A Dutch study on the Turkish second generation indicated that a higher proportion of non-coethnic friends results in a higher resemblance of these second generation adults in union formation patterns of the native young adults (Huschek, De Valk and Liefbroer 2008). Furthermore, contexts are likely to differ by country offering different opportunities to form strong and weak ties in the receiving country.

The exposure of second-generation Turks to these opposing views on family formation offers the opportunity to study the influence of embeddedness into family and non-family networks. To enhance our understanding of the factors that influence union formation choices, the main research question of the paper is:

How and to what extent does social embeddedness (in the family and in non-coethnic networks) influence timing differences in the union formation of second-generation Turks?

This paper contributes to the literature by studying the influence of both the family of origin and non-family networks on union formation of second generation Turks in different societal contexts. This will first of all broaden our understanding of the importance of different social actors on union formation decisions. Secondly, specifying non-coethnic networks by making a distinction between strong and weak ties is a helpful approach to evaluate the importance of different network contacts on union formation. Thirdly, by including a cross-national comparison we may assess how and to what extent the same or different factors are relevant for union formation decisions of Turkish young adults in different settings.

Hypotheses

(I) Social embeddedness into the family and into non-coethnic networks

The role of the family on union formation decisions is well established (Starrels and Holm 2000; Thornton 1991). Intergenerational transmissions of beliefs, values and family characteristics are reflected in the timing of union formation through the process of socialization. For the Turkish second generation - whose parents come from a more collectivistic hierarchical cultural background, than the more individualistic countries they grew up in - parental characteristics are particularly important factors in their timing decisions. Their family and extended kinship plays a central role in their life (Nauck 2002a). Thus, living in a family with traditional family values will likely result in an early family formation. Furthermore, there exists a well-studied link between parental human capital and the timing of union: Higher parental education or socio-economic status delays union formation of the children (Blossfeld and Huinink 1991; Axinn and Thornton 1992; Mulder and al. 2006).

Thus, factors such as a less traditional value system and a high human capital of the parents are assumed to postpone the union timing among the Turkish second generation.

The social networks of second-generation young adults are likely to consist not only of their family of origin and co-ethnic young adults but also of young adults from the receiving countries and from other ethnic groups. Networks (both co-ethnic and non-coethnic) are build through contact with out-group friends and acquaintances or through more indirect contacts, e.g. within the community and neighborhood or in communication with institutions (for example school attendance). It can be expected that those with many contacts to non-coethnic

persons will be more exposed to and be more influenced by dominant ideas and behavioral patterns within the native society than those with few contacts outside their own community.

However, although children of immigrants tend to gradually adopt specific traits from the host society, there are domains of life for which this may be less the case. Previous research has shown that structural adjustment in the area of education and job market are likely to be the first to occur, whereas core values relating to family ties and gender patterns are slower to be changed. Union formation belongs to these latter aspects (Foner 1997; Lesthaeghe 2000). Aspects of union formation such as the choice between marriage and cohabitation and ethnicity of the partner belong to the most crucial normative aspects of union formation in Turkish families. The timing of a union, however, is also related to more practical issues and parents and family may take here less interest than for instance in the background of the partner of their children. Therefore, non-coethnic friends and acquaintances may be more likely to influence the timing of a first union, especially if they are numerous. Although, conformity with parents' values is usually high (Nauck 2002a), it may be that some second-generation youths choose to break with their family of origin due to, for example, conflicts. These young adults may also be more likely to resemble the native young adults in their union formation patterns. This reasoning leads to the following hypotheses about social embeddedness:

Turkish second generation young adults with a stronger social embeddedness into non-coethnic networks are more likely to postpone union formation compared to those second-generation Turks with a weak embeddedness into non-coethnic networks.

(II) Strong vs weak ties in non-coethnic networks

Social embeddedness is a generic concept that incorporates many different types of social contacts. However, not all kind of contacts with natives and persons from other ethnic groups may be equally important in influencing the timing of union formation of second generation young adults. Granovetter (1973) introduces a useful distinction between two types of social ties, weak and strong ties. Strong ties consist of close friends and weak ties of acquaintances. Those social ties are a form of social capital and offer opportunities and constraints for the individual actor. Weak ties often function as bridges to connect social networks and can facilitate information gathering, and diffusion of new ideas (Granovetter 1983). Strong ties are usually more important to generate social and emotional support, and act as a major support system in times of need, because they are characterized by high levels of time investment and intimacy.

Given the centrality of the family in the lives of people in general, and among migrants from Turkey in particular, it can be expected that strong ties are more relevant for decision making concerning the timing of union formation than weak ties, because only close contact will offer similar support or constraints than the family. Having close native friends offers the possibility to closely observe alternative behaviours and having an alternative support network of native friends can increase the likelihood of choosing a behaviour that resembles that observed among these native friends. Following this argumentation we would expect strong ties to be of higher importance than weak ties with respect to timing of union formation. This leads to our second hypothesis:

The timing of union formation of second-generation Turks having strong ties in non-coethnic networks will resemble those of native young adults more than second-generation Turks who have no or only weak ties to non-coethnic networks.

(III) Relevance of social embeddedness in different countries

The social embeddedness into non-coethnic networks may differ by country, because of different opportunities and constraints. Schools, which are the most likely place to form contacts to non-coethnics in adolescence, can differ in their ethnic composition and different levels of segregation in neighbourhoods may lead to a greater separation between ethnic groups. Some second-generation young adults may therefore be less likely to establish strong or weak ties with persons from other ethnic groups. Nevertheless, once ties with non-coethnics exist they are likely to be of similar importance for the second generation in terms of support and influence, which leads to our third hypothesis:

The effect of strong and weak ties on timing of union formation will be similar for second generation Turks in the different countries

Data and methods

To test our hypotheses we use data from “The integration of the European second generation” (TIES) survey. The TIES survey is an European comparative study that investigates the lives of the second generation from Turkey, Morocco and Ex-Yugoslavia as well as a native group in 15 cities in eight European countries. For the survey 10,000 respondents aged 18 to 35 years were interviewed in 2007-2008. Our sample includes data from 11 cities with approximately 250 Turkish second-generation per city. This results in a total sample of 2,610 respondents (1373 women, 1237 men) of whom 1141 (660 women, 481 men) entered a first union. The cities are Amsterdam and Rotterdam (the Netherlands), Paris and Strasbourg (France), Berlin and Frankfurt (Germany), Stockholm (Sweden), Zurich and Basel (Switzerland) and Vienna and Linz (Austria).

Social embeddedness is measured in terms of having weak and strong ties to the host society. To measure weak ties, we use information about the ethnic composition of the secondary school that was attended. To measure strong ties, we created a factor score including the ethnicity of the best friend, the proportion of the ethnicity of the three best friends in secondary school and on the number of natives in the wider friends’ network in secondary school. Testing for the human capital of the parents, we equally created a factor score on level of parental education, language and writing skills of the parents in mother tongue and language of receiving country. Furthermore, we include a variable of the family size (number of siblings) representing a proxy for more conservative family values of the family of origin.

To control for other important influences on the timing of union formation of young adults, individual characteristics (completed secondary education (below secondary, basic, vocational, academic), age and birth cohort) are included. Our analysis is done separately for men and women due to general gender differences in first union formation timing. To test our hypotheses on the influence of social embeddedness, we use a yearly logistic regression, where we created yearly age records for each respondent, allowing us to control especially for age.

Results

Descriptive results

Figure 1 shows a Kaplan-Meier survival curves for entry into first co-residential union of second generation Turks in eleven European cities. Women enter earlier into a union than

men. However, by age 30 the share of men and women in a union is almost similar (approximately 75 percent).

Figure 1: Kaplan-Meier survival curve

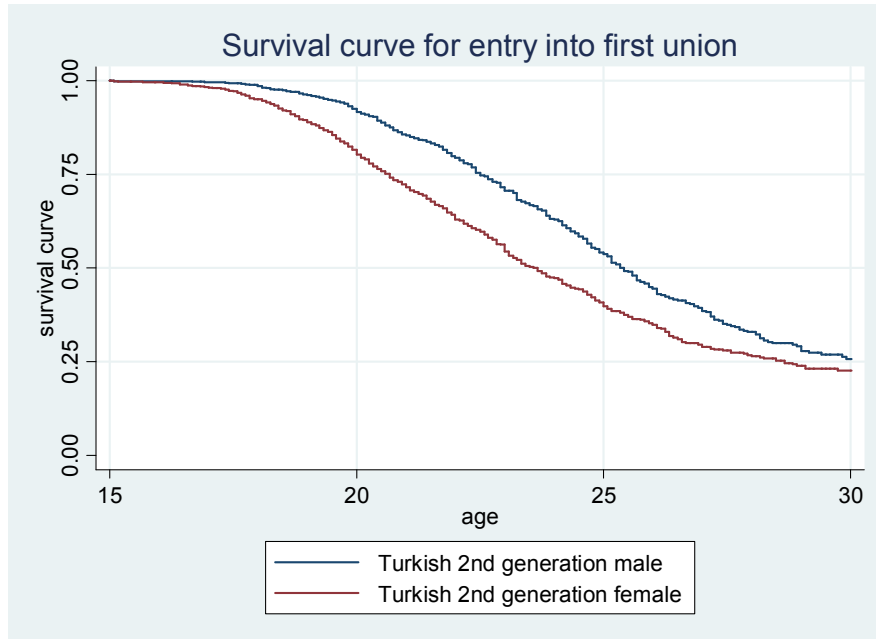


Table 1: Median survival time of entry into first union

COUNTRY	median men	women
Netherlands		
Amsterdam	25,6	22,7
Rotterdam	24,3	22,6
France		
Paris	26,1	26,6
Strasbourg	26,1	22,8
Germany		
Berlin	25,2	24,7
Frankfurt	27,3	25,2
Austria		
Wien	24,8	21,2
Linz	23,4	22,7
Switzerland		
Zürich	28,4	25,8
Basel	24,3	23,3
Sweden		
Stockholm	27,6	24,7

Table 1 shows the median survival times of the eleven cities by gender. There are differences in the timing between countries and within countries. For the whole sample, the median survival time of first union is 23.6 years for women and 25.4 years for men. The fastest transition is experienced by women in Strasbourg, the two Dutch and the two Austrian cities. The women in Paris enter a union later than the women in the other cities. On average, men

enter earlier in a union in Basel, Rotterdam and the two Austrian cities. The within countries city differences are largest for men in Switzerland and for women in France. These differences might be related to factors such as rental prices, parental place of origin in Turkey, conservatism of a city in general, and a higher student population in a city.

Multivariate findings

The results of the multivariate analysis are displayed in Table 2. Testing for the influence of family factors we found that higher human capital of the parents is delaying entry into first union (not shown), however this effect disappeared when the variable number of siblings was added. A one unit change in the number of siblings increases the odds of entering into a union by a factor of 1.18 for women and 1.13 for men. Thus, an increasing parental family size will result in an earlier entry into a union. Thereby, this variable could be interpreted as a proxy for the conservatism of the family of origin. Parents with more traditional family values have usually a higher number of children. These values are likely to influence in turn an earlier union formation of their children, especially in case of the Turkish community where the influence of the family is strong. On the other hand this finding could also be explained by a space and resource argument. In families with many children, children move out early because of the lack of space, time and money in their parental home. Educational enrollment or higher educational attainment are the main reasons of postponing union formation in general, because societal norms usually expect young adults to finish their education before they form a union or a family (Blossfeld and Huinink 1991). This argument can be connected to an interest of the parents in their child's school achievement. Our findings show that women whose parents showed a higher interest in their children's school performance postponed their union formation slightly.

Our findings support at least partially our expectations. However, our hypothesis that higher human capital of parents will result in a postponement of union formation could only be found as long as we did not control for more traditional family values. Possibly these values are much more important in influencing the timing process than human capital factors of the parents.

Our findings indicate an influence of non-coethnic peers on the timing of union formation, thereby confirming our hypothesis that the second generation may postpone union formation when being more embedded in non-coethnic networks. These findings, however, are only significant for women. Having strong ties outside their own ethnic group (factor score peers) reduced the probability of first union formation by 10 percent per unit. Additionally, we also found a u-shaped effect of weak ties for women's union formation timing. Second generation women attending schools with few natives and schools with many natives were earlier in their union formation than those women who attended schools where the minority and majority groups were similar in numbers. This would support a curvilinear relationship: in schools with few minority students second generation youth might stick together and form a more closed group, whereas an intermediate number of second-generation students results in more mixed ethnic friendships in schools. In case there are almost only immigrant students there will again be few mixed ethnic friendships, because the native population is now in a minority position and may form a more closed group. Both minority-majority situations reduce the building of weak ties between the groups that offer access to alternative behaviors. Our hypothesis on the higher importance of strong ties into non-coethnic networks than those of

weak ties could not really be confirmed. Both strong and weak ties had an effect for women and both no effect for men.

Table 2: Yearly logistic regression showing odds ratios

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	WOMEN		MEN	
	Odds Ratio	95% CI	Odds Ratio	95% CI
FAMILY FACTORS				
human capital parents ¹	0.99	0,90-1,09	0.99	0,89-1,10
schooltalk with parents (freq-never)	1,01*	1,00-1,03	1.02	0,99-1,04
number siblings	1,18***	1,11-1,25	1,13***	1,06-1,22
PEER FACTOR				
non-coethnic peers ¹	0,90*	0,82-0,99	0.99	0,88-1,10
percentage natives at sec. school	0,65*	0,43-0,98	0.73	0,46-1,16
(% nat. at sec. school)*(% nat. at sec. school)	1,07**	1,01-1,15	1.03	0,96-1,11
CONTROL VARIABLES				
completed secondary education	0,68***	0,60-0,76	0,86*	0,75-0,99
cohort (1970-74, 75-79, 80-84, 85-90)	0,69***	0,63-0,76	0,72***	0,64-0,80
age	1,03***	1,03-1,03	1,04***	1,04-1,05
age*age	1,00***	1,00-1,00	1,00***	1,00-1,00
age*age*age	1,00***	1,00-1,00	1,00*	1,00-1,00
city/country results not displayed	*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001			

¹ factor scores

Our control variables showed the expected trends. A higher educational degree after secondary school resulted in a lower probability of entering a union by 32 percent per unit for women and 14 percent per unit for men. Belonging to a younger birth cohort equally resulted in a postponement of union formation.

Our analysis also controlled for city variation in the timing of union formation of the Turkish second generation. Some city variation remained significant; however, the overall effects of the family factors and peers are similar in all the eleven European cities thereby confirming our hypothesis.

Most of our findings were only significant for women. This could possibly be explained by the fact that postponement in union formation is mainly related to longer stays in the education system. Turkish second generation men usually enter later in a union formation, therefore longer stays in the educational system might not make a large difference (age norms on appropriate times of union formation would be still valid for men). However, if Turkish second generation women finish a higher education level before their union formation this will postpone their union formation that used to be very early. Another reason for finding an effect for peers on the timing of union formation for women but not for men could be related to the different types of friendships men and women form (Vaquera & Kao 2008). Girls' friendships are more intimate, therefore they are more influential and offer more support. Having non-coethnic peers offers alternative sources on union formation behavior, on educational careers and knowledge on navigating the city-country specific educational system. Thus having these non-coethnic friends might offer more resources for women.

Our analysis showed that the timing of union formation of the Turkish second-generation youth is influenced by family factors; particularly in case of the male group this was the only significant finding. However, we found that a higher embeddedness into non-coethnic peer networks influences the timing of women. The findings emphasize the importance of social actors outside the family on union formation choices. Further analysis will be necessary to study the remaining city and country differences in the timing of a first co-residential union.

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