

**Intergenerational conflicts in migrant and native families:
An exploration of the connection with leaving home**

Helga A.G. de Valk

Contact details:

Helga de Valk

Vrije Universiteit Brussel/ Interface Demography

Pleinlaan 2

1050 Brussels, Belgium

email: hdevalk@vub.ac.be

Abstract

Migration and adaptation to new customs in the receiving context are often perceived a stressful event for the family making intergenerational tensions between parents and children more common in migrant families than in majority group families. In this paper I study the intergenerational conflicts with parents of young adults in a multi ethnic sample (TIES study; N=7,200) of 18 to 35 year old second generation migrants and their native peers in six European countries. First of all I question whether second generation young adults report more and different intergenerational conflicts at age 17 than is the case for their peers of native background. Secondly I assess the factors that are related to more or less conflicts within and between each of the groups of origin. Finally, I study whether and how intergenerational tensions at age 17 are related with patterns of leaving home among the different origin groups.

Key words: second generation, conflict, adolescents, intergenerational relations, leaving home, family ties

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De Valk

Many studies have suggested that migration puts intergenerational ties under pressure. Families originating from countries with different value sets and beliefs as those predominant in the settlement country are suggested to be particularly prone to conflicts. Previous studies report that when language and cultural beliefs differ from those of the culture of settlement there is a potential for intergenerational conflicts (De Santis & Ugarriza 1995). Parents are important socializing agents as they transmit norms and values to their offspring (Starrels & Holm, 2000; Thomson, 1992). Migrant families are in special position here as parents were not socialized in the host society whereas their children are while at the same time the norms dominant in the country of origin may contrast with those predominant in the country of settlement (Nauck 2001). As is noted by early studies the clash in values and norms between generations can become particularly clear between first generation parents and their second generation children, the latter being socialized also in the country of settlement (Sluzki 1979). These intergenerational conflicts were expected and indeed found in migrant families in the US (Rumbaut & Portes 2001).

There are only very few studies in Europe focusing on intergenerational relations among migrant families and potential conflicts arising in these families. Those we do study these families are inconclusive but also mainly focus on solidarity rather than conflict in relations between generations (Nauck 2001; Phalet & Schönplflug 2001; Schans 2007). In addition, most European studies do not identify the second generation as a different group of young adults. It is, however, relevant to know more on this growing group of young adults who have not migrated themselves but whose parents came as migrants to Europe. This study aims to fill this gap by studying children's conflicts with parents during adolescence. This time in life is marked by a gradual transition from dependence to higher levels of independence even though interdependence remains crucial (Kagitcibasi 2005). It is often characterized by conflicts in a range of domains. One can however question whether second generation young adults will have even more conflicts with their parents than is the case for those of the majority group. Cultural dissonance could be reflected in the levels of parent-child conflicts related to alienation of the norms of the country of origin of the parents. This could be particularly true in adolescence when socialization in the settlement country will be

important. The first aim of the study is thus to assess the levels of conflict as well as to identify the domains in life in which most conflicts arise.

In order to get a more clear insight into the conflicts between children and their parents it is crucial to assess the factors that are related to more or less conflicts both within each of the groups of origin. Previous studies among different immigrant origin groups in the US and Australia for example showed that parent child conflicts are higher for girls than for boys (Rosenthal 1996; Steppick et al 2001). Given the cultural specific expectations for women in some migrant groups one could question whether this also results in more conflicts for girls of migrant origin in Europe. In addition by including both parents we can get a better understanding of the gender specific dynamics in intergenerational conflicts between father/mother and their son/daughter.

The relationship between parents and children has been found to be a key factor for many outcomes in later life (Merz 2010; Rossi & Rossi 1990). Still relatively little is known on this point for migrant families. One could expect that conflicts with parents during adolescence are an important factor in the many choices in the transition to adulthood that follow shortly after. One of the first and key transitions that young adults make is the transition out of the parental home. The extent to which this transition among migrants is determined by family factors and intergenerational ties is suggested in earlier studies (de Valk & Billari 2007; Zorlu & Mulder 2009). At the same time these studies mainly studied the impact of family solidarity rather than conflict and also did not single out second generation young adults. The current study contributes to our understanding of the potential role of intergenerational conflicts in adolescence on leaving home of young adults.

Data and method

The data for this paper come from “The Integration of the European Second Generation” (TIES) survey. This is a European comparative survey on young adults of the second generation from Turkey, Morocco and former Yugoslavia and their majority group peers. The survey was carried out in 15 cities in eight European countries. Respondents were sampled as second generation if they were born in the survey country and at least one of their parents was born in Turkey, Morocco or former Yugoslavia. In total 10,000 respondents between the ages of 18 and 35 years were interviewed in 2007/2008. An identical questionnaire was used in all cities making it possible to pool the datasets. My sample covers nine European cities in six countries (Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, and Sweden) resulting in a pooled dataset with a total sample of 7,200 respondents.

The first main interest of my study is in intergenerational conflicts in adolescence among young adults of different origins. Respondents in the study were asked to report on occurrence of conflicts with their father and mother when they were 17 years of age. In total nine different domains of life were covered ranging from conflicts on studies, friends, relationships to leisure time and religion and politics. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they had conflicts with their father/ mother “often”, “sometimes”, “never”, “not discussed at all”. Second I want to study the relation between the levels of conflict and leaving home. All respondents indicated whether they left home, at what age (in exact years) they did so and what were the most important reasons for leaving the parental home.

Preliminary findings

My findings show that intergenerational conflict is more often reported by young adults of the second generation. All second generation groups seem to have more conflicts with their parents on all domains of life than is the case for their majority group peers. Nevertheless I find clear differences by origin: Turkish second generation report most conflicts, followed by Moroccan second generation and finally majority group young adults who report least conflicts. Overall young adults report more conflicts with their mothers than fathers. This is particularly true when it comes to friends and relationship as well as household chores.

In general female young adults have slightly more conflicts as their male compatriots. At the same time patterns are not as gendered as suggested in other studies. The results on the relevance of intergenerational conflicts for leaving home, point to the fact that those with many conflicts leave home earlier and also more often give the relationship with their parents as the reason for leaving home. This pattern is found for all origin groups and no specific ethnic patterns can be identified here. All in all it suggests that second generation young adults are indeed more likely to have conflicts with their parents underlining the previous studies mainly from the US. At the same time the way in which these conflicts also affect choices in the family domain when making the transition to adulthood remains to be further explored.

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