

2000 Families – Episode 1

The Study

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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SPEAKERS

Christine Garrington, Ayse Guveli

Christine Garrington 00:03

This is the 2000 Family Research Project podcast series looking at the impact of migration across three generations of Turkish families. In today's podcast, Dr Ayse Guveli from the University of Essex explains the background to the project, how this ambitious research study came about, the unprecedented data to come out of it, and some of the early findings to emerge from it.

Ayse Guveli 00:27

The idea of this study emerged, in fact, with the questions of my parents, as a Turkish family we've been living in Europe for four generations now. And it is still a recurring topic in our family meetings. And the question is, how would our lives be if our father or grandfather did not come to Europe. Later when Norface announced a call for migration projects, my colleagues and myself have developed this research project, and it got funded with about 2.5 million euros and we worked on this project between 2009 and 2014. The basic idea is that we wanted to know whether migrants gain or lose from migration and how the lives of their descendants change over generations. Therefore, we had to compare migrants with those they left behind in the origin country, only then we can reveal the impact of migration on migrants. One also needs to compare migrants, their children and grandchildren with those left behind and their children and grandchildren to trace the enduring impact of migration.

Christine Garrington 01:48

Now, there's obviously a personal story for you coming from Turkey as you do, but from an academic point of view, what made you hone in on Turkey specifically and focus on Turkey for this study.

Ayse Guveli 01:59

The size of the Turkish migrant community in Europe is very large. The summation is that more than 5 million Turkish origin people live in European countries. And size is important because if the group is bigger, the integration processes are slower. The history and the nature of Turkish migration has its own characteristics. But it is also typical for the labor migration types. Turkish migration started in the 60s with the recruitment programme of the European countries. And this was under the guest worker

program. And they signed agreements between Turkey and the European countries, for example, Germany, Netherlands, France, Belgium and Austria. So it's stopped the recruitment of Turkish labor migrants in 1974. But after that Turkish migration continued in the form of family unification and formation. So the third reason is that Turks in European countries are spread over at least 10 countries. And that makes it very interesting to study because you then can reveal the impact of different institutional contexts and policies. The last reason is that along with other migrant groups in Europe, Turks introduced Islam in the wider European Christian countries, and religion is considered an important building block of migrant communities. But our knowledge so far, is exclusively related to non Muslim religions, like Protestants, Catholics and Jews who migrated from Europe to America and how they have established their religious communities in the United States.

Christine Garrington 04:04

So migration and its impacts clearly a very hot topic and with interest among policymakers, politicians, the media, of course the general public more widely. I wonder if there were specific aspects that you wanted to examine?

Ayşe Guveli 04:19

Well the main aim of the 2000 Family Studies is to understand the impact of migration on migrants. And that is, this study was not policy driven study. It is basically a mainly scientific study. Our main research question whether migrants gain or lose from migration is very relevant for policymakers. For example, the typical studies conducted in the destination countries show that Turks in European countries lag behind in terms of their level of education and occupational status when we compare them with the majority of destinations countries. We wanted to know whether Turks in Europe have higher or lower level of education and occupational status than their counterparts in Turkey, and whether their position is improving across family generations.

Christine Garrington 05:16

I want to rewind a little bit to what you've actually been doing since you got the funds to carry out this study.

Ayşe Guveli 05:23

We have collected data, and that includes 1,992 families. These families are generated by 1,583 ancestors who moved from Turkey to Europe, between 1960 and 1974, so these are the Pioneer migrants. And the data also includes 409 male ancestors who did not move in that period to Europe. These men are now older than 65 years old, and most of them died. But if they were still alive, we interviewed them, if they were not alive, we interviewed their children about themselves, about these ancestors. So and we have interviewed two of their children, and four of their grandchildren, and then follow the same lineage. So in total, we have all family members of these ancestors, that makes 50,000 family members. So we have information about 50,000 family members, which is huge.

Christine Garrington 06:37

And what sort of information have you collected from these people.

Ayşe Guveli 06:40

I want to turn our attention now a little bit more to some of the first research that's made use of the data. What have you and the team been looking at specifically? The data includes much more than we have been able to analyse so far. But we have been looking at how Turkish migrants in Europe developed across three generations. And we have basic socio-economic, educational, marriage, religious information about these indicators, for about 20,000 family members. So this is a bit more detailed, and we have very detailed information about 6,000 family members. These include attitudes, values, political, cultural, and social behavior and values. So it is a very unique and unprecedented data set. The study is also unique because of its design. So we went to the source regions in Turkey, of the Turkish migrants in Europe, and identified the families in these regions. We then followed all children and grandchildren of these ancestors wherever they were in the world, but most of them were in Turkey, in Germany, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Austria, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. The unique site of the study is that all these children and grandchildren in different destination countries are connected to the first cohort of migrants and non migrants ancestors in the regions in Turkey. This gives the excellent opportunity to trace back the impact of migration of 50 years, and across at least three family generations. We've been looking at how Turkish migration to Europe developed across three generations, how their educational and occupational attainments, self employment likelihood, arranged marriage, fertility, friendship networks, religion, general attitudes and identities are compared to those states in Turkey, and how these have changed across three generations.

Christine Garrington 09:07

Now, some of this, the early research that you've been doing is has just been published in a book. So tell us a bit about what we can expect from that?

Ayşe Guveli 09:14

There are many interesting findings in this book. But what I find most interesting is that we show that migration benefits migrants and their descendants. Also migration brings changes similar to the developments taking place worldwide. That is Turkish migrants are less likely in an arranged marriage. They have lower fertility rates, they have more women frankly attitudes. However, the benefits and changes decrease in the second generation and almost disappear in the third generation. The reason for this is interesting. Turkey is also catching up and modernizing and improving its socio-economic conditions. We also see some stability, for example, their attachment to Turkey continues to be strong across generations. And their religion remains high, although decreasing across generations.

Christine Garrington 10:19

So in future podcasts, we're going to delve a bit deeper into some of the chapters in the book and look at education, religion, friendships, and so forth with some of your co-authors. But I know, you want to share some important findings about the backgrounds of those Turks who migrated originally in the 1960s, and give us a bit of a taster of what we can expect from the research coming out of the 2000 families study.

Ayşe Guveli 10:40

What I can tell you now is that migration brings higher occupational status for Turks in Europe. We find that given the same education, those with lower educational status, more often migrated to Europe. This means that those who came to Europe were higher educated than those who stayed in Turkey.

Well, these are important to mention, because it is mostly thought in European countries that the least educated came to Europe, which is not true. If we compare migrants occupational status to their parents, we find something very interesting. People with least similar occupations as their parents occupation, already before migration are more likely to move. So more socially mobile people move, so they are more independent from their lower social backgrounds. So only these few findings already tell us that many more processes are playing a role in the whereabouts of migrants and their descendants. So therefore, policymakers, politicians, and even the general public should be aware of these benefits of migration. We mostly talk about societal changes in isolation, for example, European destination countries of Turks have been changing since the 1960s. And most of them are now post industrial societies, then we talk about separately that the developing countries are changing. However, how these changes play out on migrants across generations is rarely studied. We show that the benefits and changes in migration diminish across generations, mainly because Turkey has been modernizing and catching up in the last half century.

Christine Garrington 12:47

So as far as you're concerned then although you focused on Turkey, and the Turkish, this tells us something more about migration more broadly, about other migrants from other countries who have traveled to Europe.

Ayse Guveli 13:01

Yes, the idea in our 2000 Families study is unique and universal. And the perspective we apply to Turkish migration should become a part of other migration types and studies to have a complete understanding of the processes at play. We should not only compare migrants with natives or other migrant groups in the destination countries, which gives a limited view of their whereabouts, but also, they should be compared to their counterpart in their origin societies. And we should compare them across generations to trace, change and stability in people's lives.

13:01

We'll be talking in more detail about the data in the 2000 Families Study, and how other researchers can use it at a later date. But for now, I know that you do have a message for those researchers interested in migration about how they might be thinking about using the data.

Ayse Guveli 14:00

I should emphasize that the data is very rich to do plenty more research than we have done so far. Therefore, I would like to encourage researchers to use these data, they can get in touch with us directly, or download the data from the GIS Data archives website in 2016. We are also preparing a data documentation to guide the users in their analysis. But we would be happy to engage in collaborative work with them to break new grounds in migration studies with this fascinating data.

Christine Garrington 14:39

I wonder if I can ask you one final question, which is a little bit about how perhaps you feel personally about the journey you've come on over the last few years, from those early questions that you had talking with your family to having completed this study. I know there's more research to come, but it must have been an incredibly rewarding thing to do.

Ayse Guveli 14:58

Oh yes, it's has been some time difficult, of course, because my father came in his 70s to Europe and then we came after him. And we've been raised in European countries. So making this study also let me go travel in the footsteps of my father and mother and my family. So it was becoming aware of my own family history and how we have changed across generations. And yeah, that has been very interesting and emotional.

Christine Garrington 15:36

Ayse Guveli is the lead researcher on the Norface funded 2000 Families: Migration Histories of Turks in Europe research project. You can find out more about the study at www.2000families.org. The podcast series is produced and edited by Chris Garrington of Research Podcasts.