

2000 Families – Episode 5

Marriage and Children

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Migrants, children, patterns, migration, fertility, turkey, context, marriage, higher, western Europe, migrant families, Europe, Turkish, find, arranged marriage, women, cultural, generations, question, families

SPEAKERS

Dr Helen Baykara-Krumme, Christine Garrington

Christine Garrington 00:02

This is the 2000 Families Research Project podcast, looking at the impact of migration across three generations of Turkish families. In today's podcast, Dr Helen Baykara-Krumme from the Chemnitz University of Technology in Germany, talks about early findings from the project about marriage and children.

Dr Helen Baykara-Krumme 00:22

Scientific research is interesting not only in the economic outcomes of migration, but also the social and cultural dimensions. And so the question is really which patterns do migrants display when they come from a certain social and cultural context and migrate into another one, the context might differ in social and cultural terms, and also with regard to the opportunity structure from what they were used to. And then, of course, the new context poses a specific challenge to migrants, they are now in a minority situation, they may experience exclusion and discrimination just because of coming from another country. And then the question is not only how do they fare economically, but also how they cope with this new context? And how do they respond to these new opportunities? Which with regards to, for instance, the family related behavior, family formation patterns, and so on.

Christine Garrington 01:17

So tell us a little bit about how we've traditionally tended to look at these questions?

Dr Helen Baykara-Krumme 01:21

Typically we refer to classical assimilation theories, which argue that migrants assimilate and adapt over time, that is the longer they stay in the country or over generations, they become more similar to the natives in the destination context, for instance, with regard to family related behaviors. But there are also alternative theories, which suggest that migrants may actually not change their behavior, but rather stick to what they were used to in their origin context, in terms of ethnic retention, how it is caught. So they may take a social, cultural, or even also their religious heritage. And then there's the third pattern,

this theory that argues that the norms of the behaviors from the origin context may become even more important. So for migrants, and actually, these theories have rarely been tested properly in the proper design. And with our study, we can actually look at which of these theoretical propositions can we find for the case of Turkish mainland.

Christine Garrington 02:25

And then of course, there's the question of both public and political perceptions of migrants isn't there?

Dr Helen Baykara-Krumme 02:31

Many of them are actually based on prejudices rather than empirical evidence. And with our research we can help to clarify what the situation is actually really like. So with the comparison with status from the context of urgent and with the comparison, across generations, we can contextualize the patterns we observe. And we can draw a much better picture of the developments in migrant communities than other studies can do. And by this, we can better inform the public and maybe also raise understanding for certain family related issues.

Christine Garrington 03:05

Yes, indeed. So let's look then first at marriage, what particular aspects of it did you want to look at in the 2000 Families data and why?

Dr Helen Baykara-Krumme 03:14

Migration researchers are typically interested in the prevalence and development of interethnic marriages, but what is often neglected are other aspects related to marriage, which are quite interesting as well and which are quite important in public discourses as well. And this includes the marriage arrangement or the degree to which families are involved in the partner choice process, this family involvement in the spousal choice of the partner of the child is often considered as a key symbol of cultural difference. What I was interested in was how this pattern actually developed once migrants from a context such as Turkey in which this pattern of family arrangement of marriages is quite common, how they change or how they develop these patterns once they come to Western Europe, the context in which family involvement is actually very low.

Christine Garrington 04:07

So tell us a little more about what we actually know about arranged marriages in Turkey and in Western Europe?

Dr Helen Baykara-Krumme 04:14

The point is that marriage arrangement was quite important in Turkey for a long time. But there has been recently a decline over cohorts. And the question is then how do migrants in Western Europe, how do they respond to the specific cultural and structural context in Europe? And whether we find additional changes and additional migration effect we call it for these migrant children and the migrant families.

Christine Garrington 04:42

Indeed. So what did you find and as far as arranged marriage was concerned for both migrants and those who elected to stay in Turkey?

Dr Helen Baykara-Krumme 04:49

They showed that arrangement was clearly on the decline both amongst the US and Turkey, and among migrants and their children in Europe's but we could also show that marriage arrangement is lower in migrant families in Europe. So in the grandfather's generation, for instance, far more than 8% of the individuals were in an arranged marriage. But in the grandchildren generation, there were only 4-6% among the stayers and 37% of the migrants who are still in an arranged marriage.

Christine Garrington 05:22

And what do you make of that?

Dr Helen Baykara-Krumme 05:23

Okay, a third of the children are in an arranged marriage in the third generation or in the younger marriage cohorts. And this might sound quite a huge number for us in Western Europe. But when we then have a look at the patterns in Turkey, and the patterns of the parents and the grandparents of these children, we can much better contextualize these patterns that we observe, and much better understand how massive these changes are that are going on in families of migrant origin and these massive changes that migrant families have to deal with when they come to a context like Western Europe. And so we find that marriage arrangement is quite important, but it has declined over generations and that, in fact, intergenerational transmission of these marriage patterns is much lower in migrant families. So actually, we can support the argument of adaptation or we may call it assimilation to patterns in Western Europe.

Christine Garrington 06:26

So were there any other characteristics or factors that that you found were of play when it came to the likelihood of an arranged marriage?

Dr Helen Baykara-Krumme 06:34

We could show that, as I said before that time matters. So more recent cohorts are more rarely arranged. And this is, again, true for families, both in Turkey and in Europe. So this pattern is already on the decline and the family influence is actually changing. And also, what we found is, and this is well known from the literature that individuals with higher education who are less likely to be an arranged marriage. And what is quite interesting, we find that migrants in our sample have a higher education and this was reported by a doctor already. But this difference in education could not explain the differences we found between migrants and stayers. So what we find is really a more or less genuine migration effect, or adaptation effect in Western Europe.

Christine Garrington 07:22

Let's look now then what you found about the decision or not of Turkish migrants and non migrants to have children. What did you examine here? And how did you go about that?

Dr Helen Baykara-Krumme 07:31

Here the question was quite similar. So in Western Europe, fertility levels are very low, women get their children quite late, and they get one or two if at all. And in Turkey, by contrast, fertility levels used to be very high, and childbearing is still today occurs still quite early in life. So again, migrants from Turkey, when they come to Western Europe, they change from one context to a very different one, in this case, from a high to a low fertility context. And actually, we know very little so far about how this international migration and then the upbringing of the descendants of these migrants actually affects the fertility outcomes, because usually, fertility patterns of Turkish migrants are compared to the edge of the majority population, the European destination countries, or it is compared with other migrant groups. So when we then find and this is often the case that Turkish migrants still have higher birth risks, as we call it, so they get their children early in life, and they have a higher chance to get a second and a third child as compared to the native populations in in Europe and the Germans or the Dutch for instance. Then this is typically explained with Turkish culture and it is interpreted as important behavior.

Christine Garrington 08:50

So again, what we know already about Turkish families, or Turkish mothers and decisions around when they're having children, how many children they're having?

Dr Helen Baykara-Krumme 08:58

In the 1960s, one woman got on average six children, and today the number has gone down to slightly above two children per woman. So their fertility is still higher than in Germany for instance, but this is about the level of France or the Scandinavian countries. In the light of this development in Turkey, we really have to ask whether the patterns we find for migrants really display the fertility patterns, which are prevalent in Turkey and whether this is really the Turkish culture and actually we have to ask what the Turkish culture really is with regard to fertility. And the question is, whether it is not more likely to find rather migrant specific behaviors here. I was able then to actually have a look to what extent migrants actually display the patterns that we know from Turkey or to what extent they are patterns are specific to migration.

Christine Garrington 09:55

One of the things you did look at was when it was about the timing of the first child. So when it when it came to that, what did you find about the timing of the first child? And what did you find and what factors were at play here?

Dr Helen Baykara-Krumme 10:09

For the first child, we found that migrant women actually had a lower transition rate. So they got their first child later than a woman in Turkey, and they had a lower chance of having a first child at all. However, this difference was related to the higher educational attainment. And we know from many studies that fertility outcomes are related to educational attainment. So people, women who are higher educated tend to postpone their start into parenthood, and they get a smaller number of children. And when we accounted for the higher educational outcome of migrant women in Europe, we found there were no remaining differences between status and migrants with regard to the first child. So that is the pattern we find for the first child largely corresponds with a pattern with a fertility outcomes in Turkey. In that respect, we can actually say that there is no dissimulation how we call it, but rather a high similarity between the migrants and their origin contexts.

Christine Garrington 11:11

And what about subsequent children? What did you find of interest there?

Dr Helen Baykara-Krumme 11:14

For the subsequent children we found again small differences for the second child, but larger ones for the third child. And interestingly here, but we have to study this further. Here, we found that migrant women had higher transmission rates for the third child, even when we controlled for various composition effects, or we call it, and so by tendency, we actually found that fertility patterns seem to diverge in the European context. And migrant women tend to have a third child or subsequent children earlier and more often than women in Turkey. So fertility seems to be slightly higher among migrants. And this is quite interesting. We have to study this further. And we do not really know how we can explain this.

Christine Garrington 11:58

Yeah really interesting findings. Do you have any theories?

Dr Helen Baykara-Krumme 12:01

It might be the specific conditions the opportunity structure in Europe, which enables migrants to get a third child, which makes it easier for women to get a third child as compared to the context in Turkey. Or it may also be that women in Europe, the migrant women actually lack what we call action alternatives. We know that good jobs and career chances are important alternatives to multiple motherhood and maybe these migrant women did not have this chance to see so they opt for for another childhood instead, or it might also be that this woman valued more children more than Turkish woman do. So we don't really know how this pattern comes about.

Christine Garrington 12:47

So what would you say the main takeaway points from this?

Dr Helen Baykara-Krumme 12:50

What our data indicate is that the fertility pattern we find is to some extent specific to the migration context and that it is not an important behavior in the sense, it is commonly referred to. So really, I mean, these findings give us an idea of we cannot simply describe differences that you find between the native populations and the migrants in the spatial context with regard to the country of origin, without actually looking at what is going on in the country of origin as well. And these changes in Turkey with regard to marriage patterns, as well as fertility outcomes has been, have been so rapid over the past decades, that it is really difficult to speak of Turkish culture. And our data, and this is so unique about our study allows us to actually draw a much better picture of the development, the family related development in this case in the migrant communities and to what extent this is a reflection of the origin cultural and to what extent this might actually be a response to the specific context the migrants find in Europe.

Christine Garrington 13:13

Dr Helen Baykara-Krumme was talking to Chris Garrington, about her research on the marriage and fertility decisions of the study's participants. The research is published in Intergenerational Consequences of Migration, Socio Economic, Family and Cultural Patterns of Stability and Change in Turkey and Europe. And that's published by Palgrave Macmillan. You can find out more about The Norface funded 2000 Families Research Project at www.2000families.org.