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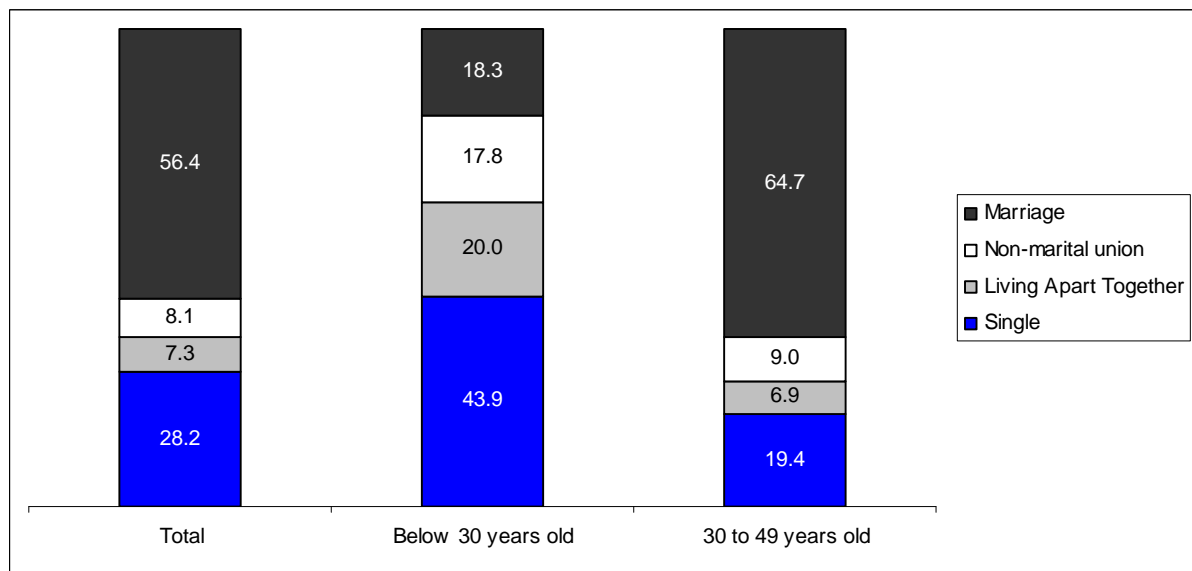
Extended abstract for the presentation at the European Population Conference 2012, Stockholm, Sweden, topic 201, “Families and households”

Transitions of Non-marital Unions within Three Years in Comparison between Turkish Nationals in Germany and Germans without Migration Background

Background

Without a doubt pre or non marital unions are an alternative living-arrangement in Germany now. As a legitimate kind for intimate relationships for people who do not want to marry it has a broad societal acceptance, although married couples are still the vast majority. The number non-marital unions actually increased in past ten years from around 2,028,000 in 1999 to 2,681,000 in 2009 (Federal Statistical Office). Based on analyses of the German Generations and Gender Survey the non-marital union is on place three after marriage and singles (Dorbritz 2009; see figure below).

Figure 1: Proportion of living arrangements, in %



Source: German GGS first wave (2005)

Basic criteria for a non-marital union is an exclusive intimate, sexual relationship intended to be durable (Huinink; Konietzka 2007). Beside this it is often discussed what extent of institutionalization a non-marital actually has. This can be seen in the descriptions like “trial marriage” on the one hand which implies a temporary character or “marriage without certificate” what implies a permanent status (Peuckert 2008). This shows the empirical

relevance of this paper, to investigate the continuity of non-marital unions and to understand for whom and why it is an alternative to marriage.

It is also known that the durability of non-marital unions depends on the social and cultural acceptance of this living arrangement. It is likely that some social groups do not accept it anyway, other as temporary before marriage and others as alternative. The transition and its timing of non-marital union to marriage can be associated with specific demographic, cultural, religious and socio-economic variables. The majority of Turkish citizens in Germany is religious and is following specific social norms which are more often conservative compared to the attitudes of Germans without migrations background (Naderi 2008). The share of Turkish citizens in Germany ever lived in a pre- or non-marital cohabitation is about 23% compared to 80% of Germans without migration background (ibid.).

Research questions and aim of the paper

One of the basic questions on the issue of non-marital unions is their continuity. What makes couples decide to stay unmarried and vice versa? And on the other hand – and this is important for the paper: What are the circumstances that lead to a transition to marriage or dissolution after three years?

Based on that questions this paper aims to compare Turkish citizens and Germans without migration background, because this gives the opportunity to analyze a different cultural impact within the same regional framework. In that respect the ethnic affiliation can be seen as one explanatory variable. At the same time the one or the other group can be used to control the results. Are the same independent variables explanatory for both or not? If not why are there differences?

Hypotheses

It is most likely that people who dismiss marriage as institution will stay unmarried. In that respect it is a cultural aspect and differs therewith by social norms given by ethnic affiliation and religious believes. Hence the hypothesis is:

H1: Attitudes towards non-marital cohabitations can explain the existence of durable non-marital unions and therewith the difference of the prevalence of non-marital unions for Turkish citizens in Germany and Germans without migration background.

On the other hand unmarried couples often decide to marry because of the birth of children. This leads to the second and third hypothesis:

H2: The birth of a child let the individuals ignore their negative attitudes towards marriage and those respondents will be married in the second wave.

H3: The birth of a child let the individuals change their negative attitudes towards marriage and those respondents will be married in the second wave.

It is likely that socioeconomic circumstances are influencing the attitudes on the one hand as well as the actual decision for a certain living arrangement. Hence the hypothesis is:

H4: The change of the job status and income level related variables will lead to the transition of non-marital unions to marriage (or to dissolution) from wave 1 to wave 2.

Methods and data-source

For this analysis both waves of the German Gender and Generations Survey will be used. For the comparison between Germans without migration background and Turkish citizens the main survey and the supplemental survey will be analyzed. For the second wave are around 3,000 German and 1,000 Turkish respondents available. The first have been conducted in 2005 and 2006, the second wave in 2008/2009 and 2009/2010.

Beside the description of the transition it is planned to conduct event-hsitory analyses and to estimate related regression models. The dependent variable is based on the status in wave 1 and the change in three years to wave 2. Four statuses will be constructed: “Non-Marital union still exists”, “transition to marriage”, “transition to living-apart-together relationship” and “dissolution”. The main independent variables are the migration background, attitudes, values, birth of children and socio-economic variables.

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