

Entering adult life for descendants of immigrants: the importance of intergenerational relations

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Qualitative research on descendants of immigrants living in France is extensive and explores various domains of social life (experience of racism, school careers, occupational integration, dating, etc.), but quantitative surveys examining their entry into adult life are rare. Consequently, the various stages towards greater personal freedom that define their acquisition of adult status are less well known, although these are widely covered in the sociological literature on the mainstream population. Based on the analysis of the data from the survey *Trajectoires et Origines* (TeO) carried out by INED and INSEE in 2008, this communication aims to explore how young descendants of immigrants living in metropolitan France pass through these stages and at what ages. It will examine how individual (education trajectories) and family resources (social background, migration history and relationships within the family) influences how and when descendants of s enter adult life.

In order to understand any specific features of immigrants' descendants in their entry into adult life, it is important to bear in mind the diversity of behaviour due to the strength of cultural patterns, and to the impact of public policies, which may favour or hamper the independence of the young.

European comparisons have shown that Northern European countries place a high value on individual autonomy and independent behaviour. These are the countries where age at first leaving home is earliest (median approximately 21). Scandinavian governments encourage this independence by granting financial aid to young people independently of their parents' income, causing what some observers have called "de-familialisation". Consequently, young people can move out of the parental home even before they complete their education and get their first job.

Conversely, Southern European countries exhibit later leaving of the parental home (around 27 in Spain and Italy). Governments here are notable for not providing any public support for the process of increasing independence among the young, leaving families to carry the financial burden of this process. The result is that young adults go on living with their parents. This family management of the transition to employment means that young people remain under the more or less watchful eye of their parents.

France, Belgium and Germany occupy an intermediate position, where the age at leaving home is around 23. In France, since there is no minimum income under 25 and the labour market is relatively closed to younger cohorts, only housing grants may in some cases encourage young adults to leave home.

Leaving home at a later age is also common in North Africa. Although there has been no quantitative survey of leaving home age in these countries, qualitative research has shown that leaving home is really only possible on marriage. Age at first marriage is now about 27 in this area.

How people enter adult life is also known to vary according to social background and gender: women leave the parental home and form a couple earlier than men, and while the young from wealthy homes move out at the same age as those less well-off, they form their first stable couple later.

These divergent ideas concerning the transition to adulthood express the variety of public policies towards young people and also correspond to specific features relating to social values and positions. The diversity of national patterns, and within each country (particularly specific features of immigrant groups) reveals differentiated processes of young adult independence.

Consequently the questions we will answer in this communication are: What routes do children of immigrants take? Are they different from other young people? If so, why? What can the TeO survey tell us about this topic? Do the stages of the entry into adult life occur in the same way for young people from various migration groups? Are they the same for young men and woman? How do individual (educational trajectory) and family resources (social background, migration history and relationships within the family) influences how and when descendants of immigrants enter adult life?

The results described will be based on an analysis of the data from the survey *Trajectoires et Origines: enquête sur la diversité des populations de France* (TeO) carried out by INED and INSEE in 2008-2009. This quantitative survey of 22,000 respondents examined the living conditions and social trajectories of both immigrants and DOM (French overseas territories) natives aged 18 to 60 and the descendants of immigrants and DOM natives aged 18 to 50, living in metropolitan France. The survey also included a sample of respondents born in metropolitan France of parents both born with French nationality in France or abroad. This sample corresponds to the mainstream population, in numerical and social terms, compared with the immigrants and descendants of immigrants minorities. The survey is representative both of the groups of origin and of the whole population living in metropolitan France.

This communication will present the salient stages in the transition to adult status for the population of immigrants' descendants, as compared with the mainstream population. The stages in this transition are traditionally defined as: leaving school, leaving the parental home, first stable job, forming a couple and birth of first child. These events occur relatively "late" in contemporary France. This is seen here in the fact that few of the 18-25-year-old TeO respondents had completed all these stages, whatever their parents' country of birth: 66% of the 18-25 group were still living with their parents. For that reason, we will restrict our analysis to those aged 26 to 35.

The descendants of DOM natives and of immigrants in the most recent migrations—sub-Saharan Africa, South-East Asia and Turkey—were relatively young and few had completed the stages under study. Many were still living with their parents and few had formed their first couple. Consequently, the small numbers involved, particularly when broken down by gender, prevent them being included in the analysis. For that reason, our study will be restricted to the descendants of immigrants in the oldest and largest migration groups, from Spain, Italy, Portugal, Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. Consequently, their parents come from cultural backgrounds where young people leave home in ways widely different from the dominant pattern in France.

The TeO survey questionnaire records a large number of retrospective data that can be use to examine various biographical sequences (education, employment, housing, marriage and parenthood). We will examine first the median age at the key stages of completing education, obtaining a first stable job, leaving the parental home, forming a first couple and birth of a first child. These median ages can be determined by the survival curves of the Kaplan-Meier estimator. Each of these stages will be described and in particular the final educational

qualifications obtained, the length of time between completing education and obtaining the first stable job, and the type of union formed. We will then compare the median age at each of these stages in order to establish a typology of adult transition timetables. We will then conclude with what this timetable reveals about gaining independence from the family of origin.

We will see that the timing of leaving home and getting one's first stable job can be used to distinguish between two types of family solidarity during this transition: "monetary solidarity" where the parents finance their children to enable them to experience autonomous life (the young leave home and their parents finance some or all of their autonomy) and "solidarity in kind" to make up for the difficulties the young have in finding autonomous accommodation, while encouraging money transfers from younger to older (those who live with their parents generally contribute to parental household expenses).

Young descendants of immigrants seem more likely than the majority group to belong to the latter case. However, the cultural dimension is not the only explanatory variable. Social background appears to have a considerable impact, leading to wide variations.

However, the young who leave home late may or may not enjoy autonomy within the family home (personal space, allowed to invite friends or sexual partners). The patterns of emancipation may be more or less restricted, and young adults of immigrant background appear to have less of this autonomous space. Living with parents to a late age may consequently conceal widely varying situations and appears to have impacts on intergenerational relations.